



## **It Takes a Coalition: Hoarding Coalitions, Why They are Needed and How they Work**

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Creating More Independence

# Overview

1. Background info about VHA
2. Overview of the Toronto Experience – from Coalition to Service Network
3. Share Learning and Recommendations



# VHA Home HealthCare

- Home health and community support organization
- Non-profit, registered charity in Ontario
- Accredited by Health Canada – Exemplary Status
- Best Practice Spotlight Organization
- Celebrating 91 years of service
- **Vision:** Accessible, quality care for all who need it
- **Mission:** Creating possibilities for more independence



[www.vha.ca](http://www.vha.ca)

# Homelessness Prevention at VHA

- VHA offers several programs to support people at risk of eviction and homelessness due to the extremely unclean state of their home.
- For 10+ years VHA has worked in service and systems planning involvement for homelessness prevention and hoarding.



# Programs and Services

- Hoarding and Clutter Toolkit
- Training services: 1 to 3 day intensive
- Clinical assessment and consultation by VHA Occupational Therapists (OTs)
- Volunteer Hoarding Support Services
- Hoarding Support Services Network
- Co-designed Clutter Service Pathway for Toronto CCAC



# VHA Extreme Cleaning Service

- Clients receive an intensive cleaning service to help avoid eviction/institutionalization
- Clients often have mental health issues, chronic illness, disability
- This quick cleanout is **not** appropriate for hoarding as traumatizes client and leads to increased hoarding behaviour

**There is no quick fix for hoarding  
behaviour!**



# Change can take weeks, months, years



Before



After

# The Toronto Hoarding Coalition

- Working in silos
- Difficult to address complex cases
- Attempts at partnerships and hoarding coalition formation
- 2007: Toronto Hoarding Coalition formed
- 2015: Toronto Hoarding Support Services Network formed



# Toronto Hoarding Coalition 2007-2015

- Coalition formed after suicide of a client with hoarding behaviour
- Westpark Health Centre held hoarding training and invited people to sign up to form advocacy group for better hoarding support services
- Cheryl Perera, Director NV and CSP became Chair of the Toronto Hoarding Coalition (2010 – 2015).
- **Sept. 2010:** Wellesley fire impacting 600 tenants raised interest and efforts to address hoarding.



# Toronto Hoarding Coalition Mission and Vision

## **Mission:**

The Toronto Hoarding Coalition exists to ensure individuals in Toronto, who engage in hoarding behaviours, have access to integrated services they need to maintain housing stability and a quality of life that optimizes their health and safety, and that of the community.

## **Vision:**

The Toronto Hoarding Coalition leads the development and implementation of a coordinated plan to address hoarding behaviour where affected individuals receive relevant services that support optimal quality of life and safe environments.



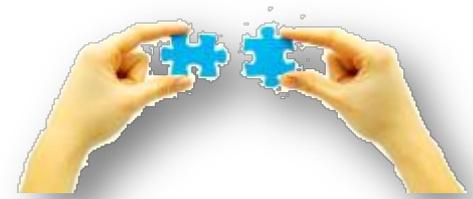
# Composition



- Toronto Coalition had upwards of 40 members
- Members from diverse sectors and included community support and health agencies, municipal services (including fire, emergency management services), hospitals, associations like ONPHA, Toronto Public Health, Toronto Community Housing (TCHC)
- Toronto Public Health, TCHC, Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre, COTA Health and VHA formed a core Executive Steering Committee

# Why form a Coalition?

- **Shared purpose to address hoarding behaviour**
- **Training offered at every meeting – invite speakers on various topics such as animal hoarding, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, legal aid, fire services, service design etc.**
- **Always had case study to share and learn from**
- **Looking for ideas for service design in their own organizations**
- **Advocacy – bringing forward challenges and needs**



# Our Journey

## Phase 1

- Getting on the same page - common understanding of the issue and our purpose (Development of Terms of Reference and Training)

## Phase 2

- Gap Analysis, Survey, Key Informant Interviews, Awareness Raising

## Phase 3

- Advocating for better service coordination and to fill gaps; looking for resources

# Challenges for Coalition



- No dedicated staff to do the work
- Lots of expectations from the community – requests were more than we could handle– we had to turn off the “contact us” section of website
- Diverse interests and goals from different sectors – e.g. some partners less interested in time-consuming treatment –and there were varying levels of commitment to attend
- Coalition scope was too large (across the whole system) for the resources we had

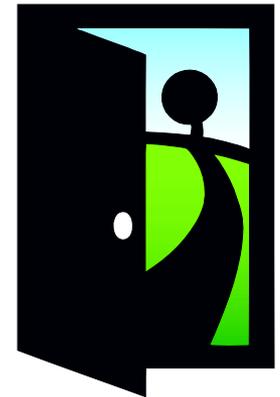
# Key Accomplishments



- Lots of media hits in 2010 due to Wellesley Fire and membership
- Survey conducted for a large group of cross-sector service providers in the City of Toronto - 2011
- Strategic Planning Session – 2013 – Focus on getting some resources to sustain the work
- Move to Executive Steering Group
- Website for the Coalition (not available anymore)
- Funding for the Hoarding Support Services Network

# Toronto Hoarding Support Services Network

- Funding application submitted in 2014 to City of Toronto and received from Oct. 2014 until March 2016
- Part 1 – Hiring Mary Compton as Project Consultant to do background work
- Part 2 – Replacing Mary with a frontline person to service clients in April 2015
- To Date – 53 clients served and 14 partners
- Phase 2 of the Network will focus on more collaboration



**TORONTO  
HOARDING  
SUPPORT  
SERVICES  
NETWORK**

# Key Learnings



- Begin with what you have – a small committed group is better than a large non-committed group
- Give staff time for Coalition work – Management commitment
- Passionate, dedicated staff are critical and create synergy
- Have a plan – even if it is high level – set some goals
- Final goal needs dedicated resource(s) – it is not sustainable to do this work off the side of your desk indefinitely
- Collaboration is important but understand what part you have control over – limit your scope to something that you can truly accomplish
- Set small short term goals to help keep everyone motivated and moving forward

# Key learnings cont.



- Someone needs to take a leadership role
- Include/consult with stakeholders, including potential funders, early
- Solutions to address hoarding can be simple – better to start small than aim for something too complicated
- Service coordination around hoarding services takes years to evolve –be patient
- Think about maintenance programs – hoarding behaviour is difficult to change

# Contact Information

To learn more about VHA's Hoarding Programs please visit our website:

[www.vha.ca](http://www.vha.ca) or contact

Cheryl Perera: [cperera@vha.ca](mailto:cperera@vha.ca)

# Thank You

VHA Home HealthCare (VHA)—a not-for-profit charity—has provided care since 1925. With over 2,000 staff and service providers VHA offers home and community services that support Ontarians' independence including: **homemaking, nursing, personal support and rehabilitation services.**

VHA is:

- Accredited with **Exemplary Standing** by Accreditation Canada
- An RNAO **Best Practice Spotlight Organization** designate and;
- A founding member agency of **United Way Toronto.**

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