

Excerpts from:

**Marin
Hoarders
Alliance**

**Field
Guide**

Prepared by:

Marin County Hoarders Alliance

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Key Concepts

Always remember – safety first.

Slow down.

Talk calmly and slowly.

Keep a safe distance.

Assess the need for additional resources- for you and/or the client.

If it's working keep doing it.

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Introduction to the Marin County Hoarders Alliance Field Guide

Case managers, mental health workers, Humane Officers, social services employees, and law enforcement officers in the field routinely encounter unexpected and unexplained behaviors. When can a person's behavior (including hoarding and cluttering) be dangerous to himself or herself, to others or to you? When can a person's erratic behavior be considered merely eccentric and without potential to cause harm?

A general understanding of Hoarding & Cluttering, and other illnesses or disabilities, coupled with your experience in the field can help you answer these questions and produce positive outcomes.

This handbook, designed as a quick field guide and resource manual, offers some general guidelines to help identify individuals who may have a mental illness or have a developmental disability. This is not a definitive or complete guide to all of the circumstances you might encounter, but is a resource to help outline risk factors for your client.

This handbook also has an overview of Welfare & Institutions Code 5150, which allows a person to be detained and taken to a hospital when there is probable cause that the person is a danger to himself or others or is gravely disabled. The information is provided to help you understand what a police officer will be looking for when you call asking for a welfare check of your client.

Finally, this handbook provides a list of emergency 24-hour resources and other resources available to help individuals throughout Marin County.

Introduction from Peer Providers

(The following introduction was provided by peers, and is included as a guideline for field workers as to what a client experiences when you visit their home.)

As peers, we recognize that field workers are likely to be a part of our lives. We understand that you are trying to help. Clients often feel stigmatized because of their illness. Clients, like field workers, have many of the same experiences: clients have good days and bad days; clients can vary from active and productive to depressed and withdrawn; clients experience stress and anxiety; clients may feel overwhelmed.

Here are some things that we feel are important for field workers to know about those who are affected by this illness:

- Clients may recognize that they need help, but are not prepared to move at the same pace as the field workers to reduce their hoard.
- Clients need to have a clear description of what is expected of them and why you are there.
- Clients need to have a clear description of what needs to be done to avoid eviction or loss of housing assistance.
- Clients need help in setting specific, achievable short-term goals.
- Clients believe that every item in their hoard has value.
- Clients experience stress in deciding which items to remove from their hoard.
- Clients need help in finding creative solutions to reduce their hoard.
- Clients need to feel that the removed items are being put to good use.
- Clients need to be reassured that it is *possible* to replace the item at a future date if they desire.

Tips for Assessing the Mental Status of Disturbed Persons in the Field

When clinicians meet people for the first time, they generally conduct a Mental Status Exam (MSE). Think of this as a "check-up" that tells you about the person's present state of mind.

As caseworkers in the field, you're looking for information that might sway your decision to seek additional help and/or have the police place a person on a 5150 W&I hold.

Consider the following categories when conducting a field assessment:

Examples:

- General Behavior
- Appearance and Self Care
- Orientation
- Memory
- Thought Structure
- Emotions or Mood (also known as "Affect")
- Lack of motivation

Strategies for Officers Writing 5150 Holds

(What officers will be looking for, i.e., the information and background you can provide to the officer)

A good 5150 report:

- Has a minimum of three detention factors.
- Accurately describes the behavior.
- Provides background history of law enforcement contacts.
- Uses written statements from witnesses and family members.
- Uses video tape and digital photographs.

Types of Disorders

Types of Disorders - Schizophrenia

Symptoms of Schizophrenia

- Positive symptoms
- Negative symptoms

Example: Types of Disorders - Bipolar Disorder

Symptoms of Bipolar Disorder

Signs and Symptoms of Mania (or a manic episode)

Signs and Symptoms of Depression (or a depressive episode)

Common Medications Used to treat Mental Illness

Examples are included under each category:

Anti-anxiety/Sedatives

Mood Stabilizers (ex: manic/bipolar)

Anti-depressants

Anti-psychotics: New Generation

Marin County Behavioral Health Resources

Example (each agency has a main number, and space for writing information for a specific person/liaison at the listed agency):

Marin County Psychiatric Emergency Services

415-499-6666

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Rape Crisis Center

800-670-RAPE or 259-2850

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Local Police Departments

Example:

San Rafael Police Dept. – 485-3000

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Mental Health Liaison Officers

Example:

Thomas Sabido – SRPD – 485-3000

Marin County Resources and Services

Examples:

AA/NA- 499-0400

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Community Mental Health Services - 499-6835

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

District Attorneys Office – 499-6450

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Public Defender’s Office – 499-6321

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Marin Housing Authority – 491-2345

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

NAMI – 444-0480

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

PGO- Public Guardian Office – 499-6186

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Acknowledgements

Some of the materials in this handbook were excerpted from the following sources:

- County of Marin Department of Health and Human Services
- Marin Housing Authority
- CIT Handbook – County of San Luis Obispo, CIT Committee
- CIT Handbook – Marin County CIT Committee
- National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI)
- Marin County Sheriffs Office
- San Rafael Police Department