

# Community Connections

A MASSHOUSING COMMUNITY SERVICES UPDATE

Winter/Spring 2009

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## TAP: 25 Years and Still Going Strong

In celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Tenant Assistance Program (TAP), MassHousing recently hosted a festive event, and acknowledged the people and partners that led to its success. TAP presented recognition and leadership awards, thanked all Management Companies who supported TAP over the years, and gave recognition to all TAP Member Sites.



*Thomas Gleason, Executive Director, MassHousing (L) with Tony Flaherty (R)*

### Recognition Awards were given to

**Tony Flaherty** - In appreciation for his voice of hope and recovery, and in recognition of his vision and commitment that has enabled MassHousing to celebrate 25 years of TAP.

**Katie Flaherty** - A sincere thanks for her exceptional teaching of substance abuse awareness to housing professionals.



*Katie Flaherty*

## TAP in 2009!

If your site has not yet joined for 2009, you have time to join other owners and managers in supporting attractive, well-maintained, healthy and fiscally sound housing communities with the valuable resources delivered through TAP's membership benefits:

- Free attendance for all site staff at training courses and conferences
- Dispute resolution services for addressing on-site conflict

- A choice of programs for residents of all ages
- MassHousing's 2009 edition of Reasonable Accommodations Handbook
- Hard copy of *Massachusetts Resident Service Coordinator's Handbook*
- Opportunities to network and establish working relationships

# Hoarding Happenings: Efforts Underway Across Massachusetts

By Ann Anderson, ADA Housing and Services

So what's happened in Massachusetts since over 500 people attended the interdisciplinary conference, *Thinking Outside Our Box(es): A Housing, Service, Clinical and Enforcement Team Approach to Hoarding* a little over a year ago? Plenty! This article will highlight just a few of these initiatives.

The MA Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) will soon launch a new Hoarding website. It will act as the portal to both government and private organizations related to hoarding. The new website is the work of representatives from a variety of state agencies and private organizations, led by Sharon Wright of EOHHS and Kay Thomas of MassHousing. When it is ready to go live, we will announce the direct link through this and other publications, trainings, and regional meetings. In the meantime, you may continue to access Hoarding information and links at [www.masshousing.com/hoarding](http://www.masshousing.com/hoarding). (This site alone has received over 7,600 hits in the last year.) It will continue to be the work of all of us to keep information and events current and relevant.

Three other statewide efforts are underway. First, Dean Gail Steketee and Doctoral Candidate Christiana Bratiotis of the Boston University School of Social Work are developing and testing a quick multi-disciplinary assessment tool useable by anyone who encounters a hoarding situation and wants to identify the variety of risks – health, safety, loss of dwelling place, removal of child or dependent adult.

Next, another interagency group is working on a hoarding policy template that provides a framework for any kind of organization to develop a policy for responding to hoarding situations.

Finally, an education committee, led by Jesse Edsell-Vetter of Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership (MBHP), has surveyed a variety of people who encounter or deal extensively with hoarding to determine what training people want compared to what is available and who provides it. The web site will always have current

training information – as long as you update it. All active regional groups have said training is the top priority.

On the local level, even more seems to be going on. In Worcester, Dianne Sandman of the Legal Assistance Corporation of Central Massachusetts secured a Central Mass Health Foundation grant to start a task force and pay for experts to do trainings. Since September, there have been four meetings with about 51 members, a very diverse group -- protective services, social workers, outreach workers, emergency medical services, private psychologists, mental health workers and clinicians, police departments (police and animal officers), board of health, subsidized housing, veterinarian specialist in animal hoarding, feline rescue, Attorney General's office, UMass Memorial Hospital, state DPH (environmental), legal services attorneys, Tenancy Preservation and a professional organizer - and growing. Even though the first training was the Monday after the ice storm, 55 of the 100 people who had signed up made it. There is a second training on housing issues being planned for February or March.

Meanwhile up north, the Beverly Hoarding Task Force has a lively blog to educate, advocate and provide resources to first responders and the community. The blog allows information sharing and advice/suggestions on difficult cases. Well-attended monthly meetings feature presenters, most recently on households where adult children have moved back in with elderly parents who hoard. See for yourself at [www.beverlyhoardingtaskforce.blogspot.com](http://www.beverlyhoardingtaskforce.blogspot.com).

There's momentum in Western Mass as well. The Franklin County group is investigating funds to pay for clean outs, perhaps Title III or HUD Resident Opportunity Support (ROSS) funds as well as Landlord outreach and education and whether there is any role for the Mass Rehabilitation Commission CERT coordinator in hoarding cases. FCROG has also applied for a grant. The Hampden County people want to connect with local fire and health board people and create a business card-sized referral form.

*Hoarding Happenings continued from previous page*

The Northampton folks wonder if treatment can be mandated by a Board of Health (BOH) or court, if an effort to bring all hoarding cases to court would force attention to be paid, if more clearly identifying the need and cost of hoarding cases could result in a more cost effective way of spending (knowing that new dollars are not possible). They are also discussing how BOH or fire department orders could be written more clearly so service providers would understand exactly what had to be cleaned up.

On another front, Randy Frost of Smith College has developed an action-oriented self-help group model. Smith students facilitated two groups of about 10 self-identified local people who used the workbook he and Gail Steketee developed. For 13 weeks, the groups went over a chapter a week. Weekly homework and periodic questionnaires suggested that participants made real progress. Further research is continuing this semester.


In Boston, Christiana Bratiotis of BU and Jesse Edsell-Vetter of MBHP secured a grant from the Third Sector New England Foundation to work with housing, mental health, and elder services to identify the ideal hoarding direct service plan for Boston.

To share all these new initiatives, the statewide hoarding committee is planning a set of four or five regional meetings in the summer or early fall to roll out the assessment tool, hoarding policy template and other regional hoarding efforts. So check the blogs and website and stay tuned!

Special thanks to Linda Saltus in MassHousing's Western Mass office and Dianne Sandman of Legal Assistance Corporation of Central Massachusetts for help with this article.

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## Community Services 2009 Annual Breakfast Meetings

<b>Roxbury (9:00 – 11:30)</b> Tuesday, March 31 New Academy Estates 2908 Washington Street	<b>Brockton (9:00 – 11:30)</b> Thursday, April 2nd The Pines 469 Pine Grove Drive
<b>Lynn (9:00 – 11:30)</b> Friday, April 3rd King's Beach Tower 130 Eastern Avenue	<b>Worcester (9:00 – 11:30)</b> Monday, April 6th Autumn Woods 15 Upland Gardens Drive
	<b>Springfield (9:00 – 11:30)</b> Tuesday, April 7th Linden Towers 310 Stafford Street