**Cape Cod Hoarding Task Force**

General Meeting

December 7, 2017

9:30 – 11:30am

Dennis Police Station

90 Bob Crowell Road

Dennis, MA 02660

**In attendance:**

Zack Seabury, Bourne Health; Kerry O’Connell, Orleans PD; Lynn Mulkeen, BCDHE; Rita, Sandwich COA; Samuek Ayer, Elder Services; Donna Rex, CIEMSS; Anna Peterson, BCDHE; Stephen Hathaway, Brewster PD; Betina Michalowski, ESSCI; Eileen O’Brien; Kevin Grunwald, Harwich COA; Carol Bishop, Provincetown BIT Facilitator; Kathy Barrett, Falmouth; Judy Giorgio, Chatham Health; Steven Ward, Chatham Health; Sue Dorey, Service Master South Shore; Maryanne, CLA; Leighanne Smith, Sandwich Fire; Jennifer Pike, Homeless Prevention Council; Brian Couletta, Harwich Fire; Andrea Lavenets, Provincetown COA; Judi Wilson, Harwich COA; Kathleen Ped, Dennis PD; Julie Brooks, Peaceful Place Organizing; Lois Carr, Bourne COA; Linda Colby, Yarmouth COA; Lori Miranda, Dennis Animal Control; Deb Scovato, Smooth Moving for Seniors; Alexandra Gerry, BCDHE, Beth Savage, Too Much Stuff Organizing; Sherrie McCullough, Brewster Health

**Meeting Minutes**

**Welcome, Introductions**

**Updates and Upcoming Events:**

* CCHTF is scheduling a strategic planning meeting for January.
* Executive Committee is looking for members. The group is seeking representation from fire or COA but anyone interested is welcome for consideration.
* Provincetown is the only BIT group currently running.
* Harwich BIT group will begin after the new year, sometime around the first or second week of January.
* Falmouth BIT group is just about finished.
* Public Awareness Task Group: releasing one PSA per month on XTK to increase awareness of CCHTF. Spring film event project has been put on hold for now and will be revisited following the strategic planning meeting in January.

**Presentation: Donna Rex – Cape & Islands EMS System/Barnstable Fire Department**

Donna Rex works for CIEMSS and Barnstable Fire Department and discussed the dangers and difficulties that hoarding creates for EMS workers, firefighters and patients. Difficulties include: maneuvering through cluttered homes in full gear; using large pieces of equipment or equipment requiring an electrical source; and accessing the patient. Each of these difficulties comes with its own set of dangers. And the list of health risks EMS workers face in hoarding situations includes: lice, bed bugs, animal and human feces, mold, urine, garbage, rodent/insect infestation and carbon monoxide. These risks create an added problem if a patient was transported. With only one ambulance to the department there is limited time to decontaminate the vehicle therefore, sometimes mutual aid is required.

Donna also discussed how hoarding can interfere with fire safety. If a fire is involved in a call to a hoarding situation, workers must consider what items this person is hoarding and what is burning. They also assess if there are two forms of egress, can it be accessed, is it stable and could the ceiling collapse due to weight. Unfortunately, when fires are reported there is no code for recording a hoarding situation or a “heavy content environment” as she refers to these circumstances, quoting Ryan Pennington of Charleston, South Carolina Fire Department. There is no known data of the number of fires started as a result hoarding. However, if a national code was created to record “heavy content environments” then fire departments could increase fire safety through education on proper ventilation, fire and CM detectors.

**Questions/Comments**

Housing court has been established on Cape Cod. The courts will be able to provide assistance with issues regarding building and fire codes and renters and landlords disagreements, among other services. This will be an asset to assisting with some hoarding cases.

One member of the audience asked if homes of clutter and hoarding could be flagged. Donna said that there is no way to flag these cases in the system, national or local. Most of the information regarding the state of a home is shared by colleagues however, much of the information must be held private. Someone suggested developing a rating system for firefighters to determining how much clutter is in a home. Since each town operates differently this is something that might not be feasible unless adopted cape wide, this idea can be brought to the chiefs’ meetings.

Harwich FD asked if there was a way to help declutter homes of patients that might have a long stay in rehab so, they can return to safer home environments. Unfortunately, Cape Cod Hoarding Task Force cannot provide direct services. There are services but many come with a fee.

Maryanne of CLA asked the audience if there were any known groups or counselors with a specific knowledge of hoarding disorder that could be compiled into a list. Hospitals, rehabilitation facilities or EMS/fire could provide this list to any patients impacted by hoarding behaviors. Linda Colby of Yarmouth COA spoke of her support group. Currently taking new members, the group consists of BIT graduates and meets every Wednesday from 2:00-3:30. Maryanne asked if there were any groups for family members. Right now, there is no known groups. Family are often referred to the BIT workbook.

Andrea of Provincetown COA asked how to help agencies understand that cleanup is a need to get funding. It was recommended to reach out to insurance companies, churches, elder services (if of age) and homeless prevention council.

There was a brief discussion on fire detectors during which Harwich highlighted their senior home safety assessment program. Through grants the fire department and COA can assess seniors’ homes for hazards and risks. They can provide fire detectors if necessary.

**Active Cases Discussion**