

Proposed Ordinance
Relating to
Hoarding and Related Behaviors



Quality of Life Committee
March 26, 2014

What Is Hoarding Disorder?

"Hoarding disorder is characterized by the persistent difficulty discarding or parting with possessions, regardless of the value others may attribute to these possessions.

The behavior usually has harmful effects – emotional, physical, social, financial, and even legal – for the person suffering from the disorder and [for] family members....

"Symptoms of the disorder cause clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational and other important areas of functioning, including maintaining an environment for self and/or others...."

From *Obsessive Compulsive and Related Disorders* (American Psychiatric Publishing) (May 2013).

"Hoarding was once considered a type of obsessive compulsive disorder, but studies have shown that only 20 percent of people who hoard also have O.C.D. Some 50 percent of hoarders, however, suffer from major depression....

"In a study published in the Archives of General Psychiatry, brain scans of patients who hoarded were compared to those of O.C.D. patients and healthy control subjects. **When asked to throw out junk mail and newspapers, the hoarders registered abnormal activity in decision-making areas of the brain, while brain activity in the other groups appeared normal....**

"Many sufferers understand they have a problem, but cannot figure out how to solve it."

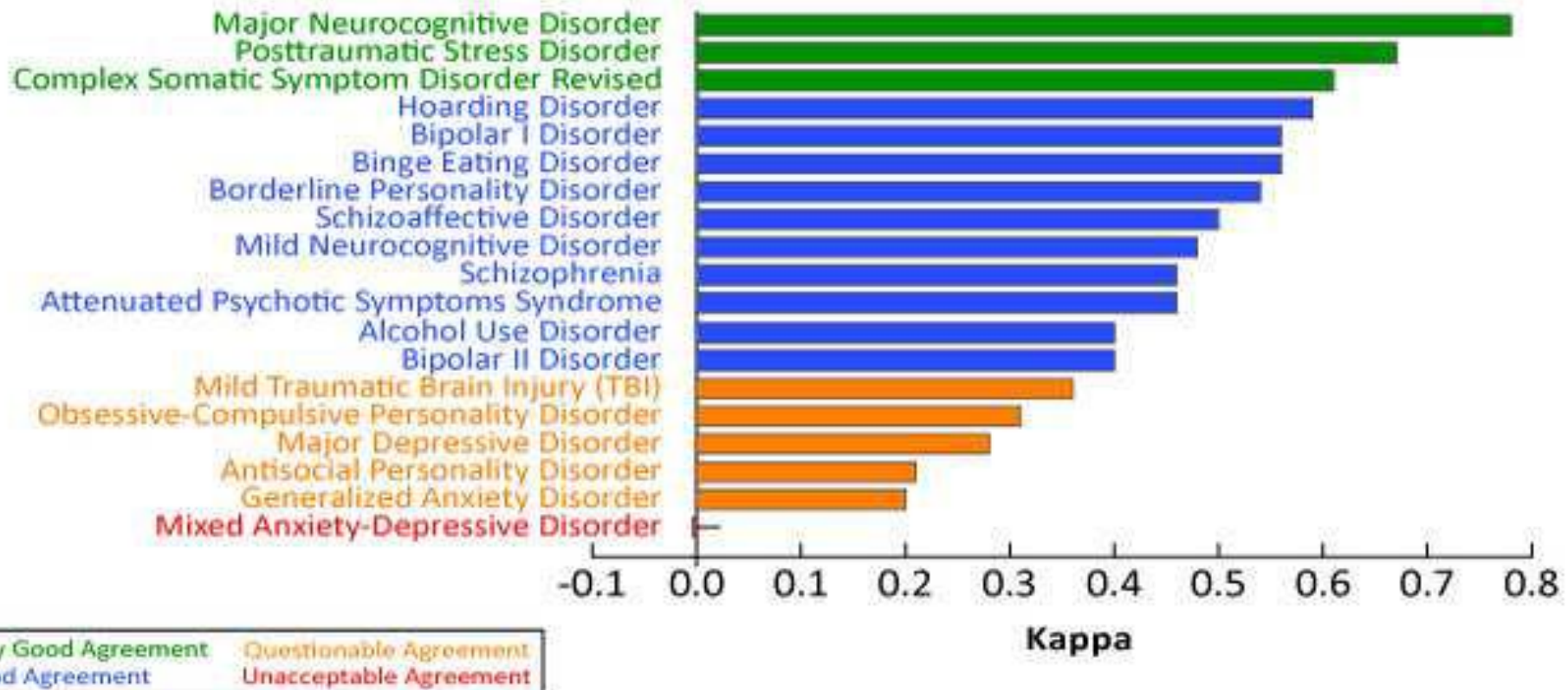
DIAGNOSTIC AND STATISTICAL
MANUAL OF
MENTAL DISORDERS

FIFTH EDITION

DSM-5

AMERICAN PSYCHIATRIC ASSOCIATION

DSM-5 Field Trials: Diagnostic Reliability of Various Diagnoses in Adults



"[S]tudies show that the prevalence of hoarding disorder is estimated at ... two to five percent of the population. These behaviors can often be quite severe and even threatening. **Beyond the mental impact of the disorder, the accumulation of clutter can create a public health issue by completely filling people's homes and creating fall and fire hazards."**

From *Obsessive Compulsive and Related Disorders* (American Psychiatric Publishing) (May 2013).



LINE



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Key Terms of Anti-Hoarding Ordinance

1. The Ordinance prohibits occupant of a "dwelling unit" from accumulating "objects or substances of a nature or in a quantity reasonably likely to create a hazard to the safety or health of an occupant of another dwelling unit on the same or a contiguous property."
2. The Ordinance is limited to lawful occupants of (1) apartments, (2) condominium units, and (3) townhomes sharing an interior wall.
3. The Ordinance clarifies when an enforcement officer must obtain a warrant to enter a dwelling unit in response to a hoarding complaint.

4. If the hoarding behavior has no impact outside the hoarder's own property, the behavior will not be unlawful under the Ordinance.



5. The Ordinance may be enforced by issuing a citation enforceable in municipal court. Upon conviction, violator is guilty of a misdemeanor and may be fined \$200 to \$500 per day of violation.
6. In Section 4 of the Ordinance, Council "declares its expectation that prosecutors assigned to handle citations ... will be mindful of the relationship that may exist between mental illness and [hoarding] and will exercise their lawful prosecutorial discretion accordingly."
7. The Ordinance authorizes enforcement officers to refer violators to approved mental health agencies.



February 17, 2014

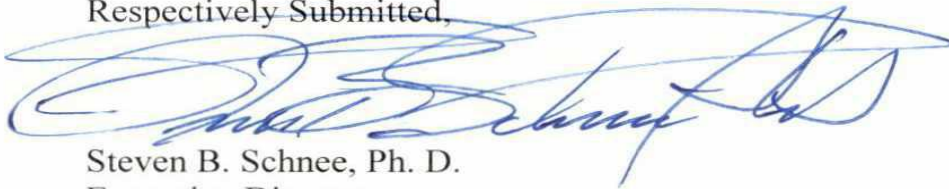
The Honorable Anise Parker
Mayor, City of Houston
P. O. Box 1562
Houston, Texas 77251

RE: Proposed Hoarding Ordinance

Dear Mayor Parker:

MHMRA has had the opportunity to work with City of Houston staff in the development of a proposed ordinance addressing hoarding. We have reviewed the draft ordinance language and submit this letter in support of that ordinance. We encourage the City Council to approve the ordinance as drafted.

Respectively Submitted,



Steven B. Schnee, Ph. D.
Executive Director

SBS:cst

February 21, 2014

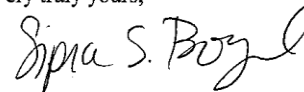
Dear Mayor Parker and City Council Members:

We are members and representatives of the Greater Houston Chapter of Community Associations Institute (CAI Houston). We have been discussing the proposed hoarding ordinance with Madeleine Appel and Tom Allen. We are pleased to have been involved in presenting our comments and concerns about the proposed ordinance. We understand that the ordinance will soon be presented to Council. We have read the ordinance and fully support it.

CAI Houston provides assistance and support to community associations through the greater Houston area and firmly believe this ordinance will help alleviate the road blocks community associations encounter in dealing with hoarders. Although we would love to see a more expansive version on this ordinance that applies to single-family residences and communities, we understand this is the first step in the process. Condominium and multi-family communities need this ordinance to protect owners that live in close proximity with hoarders. We also believe and are hopeful that the ordinance will provide assistance that is necessary in dealing with this difficult disorder.

Again, thank you for considering the ordinance and we hope that it receives the support it needs to be approved.

Very truly yours,



Greater Houston Chapter of Community
Associations Institute

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