



The Jewish Board

Health and Human Services for All New Yorkers

Addressing Hoarding and Clutter: It's Possible!

New York State Supportive Housing Conference
June 2, 2022



Learning Objectives

- ❑ Identify underlying behavioral reasons for environmental health & safety challenges
- ❑ Distinguish between hoarding and clutter as different behavioral issues
- ❑ Understand clinical and practical approaches to addressing issues of hoarding and clutter

Safe and Secure Home - Who We Are



The Jewish Board

Health and Human Services for All New Yorkers



1200

supportive
housing beds



in

4



BOROUGH'S

Hope, Recovery and Resilience

Safe and Secure Home – Who We Are

Specialized team working with residents across Jewish Board supportive housing programs

- Assisting residents living in extreme conditions due to hoarding, clutter, and/or grease and grime who need support beyond existing restorative services.
- Monitoring for fire safety risks and providing client education.
- Providing person-centered and individualized services.

Safe and Secure Home

Meet the Panel:

- **Alexandra Avena, LMSW** – Social Worker
- **Norma Cummings** – Home Based Specialist
- **Luc Fondrie-Teitler** – Residential Safety Coordinator
- **Steven Hornsby, LCSW** – Program Director
- **Helene Lauffer** – Chief Operating Officer

Starting Point: Empathy and Understanding



Getting Started - Empathy

*The ache for home lives in
all of us, the safe place
where we can go as we are
and not be questioned.*

Maya Angelou

Resident Voice

Rachel



Stressors and Contributing Factors

Lack of Social Supports

Physical Health Limitations

Past Experience of Homelessness

Family Stress or Conflict

Medication Side Effects

Lack of Needed Supplies

Lack or Loss of Skills

Low Income-Financial Stress

Roommate Conflicts

Sense of Hopelessness

History of Trauma

Learned Habits

Mental Health Issues

- Depression
- Lack of motivation
- Distorted perception
- Difficulty Concentrating
- Disorganized Thought Process

Understanding Ourselves

What We Bring

- **Personal lens** – foundational experiences about housekeeping

What lessons did you learn?

- **Concern** – *How can I let something live this way!?*
- **Frustration** – *Why can't they change?*
- **Stress** – *Landlords, neighbors, inspections*
- **Discomfort** – *Mice, roaches, grime (oh my!)*

Understanding Resident Risk

Safety and Wellness Risks Residents Encounter due to Hoarding or Clutter

Increased
Fire Risk

Slip and Fall

Lack of
Emergency
Egress

Negative
Impact on
Recovery

Inability to
Bathe
Properly

Poor Air
Quality &
Odors

Rodent &
Insect
Infestation

Loneliness
& Isolation

Pain/Fatigue
from Sleeping
on Cluttered
Surfaces

Roommate/
Neighbor
Conflict

Avoidance
of services
& supports

Loss of
Housing/
Eviction

Identifying the Needs: The Collaborative Apartment Walkthrough



Monthly Apartment Walkthroughs

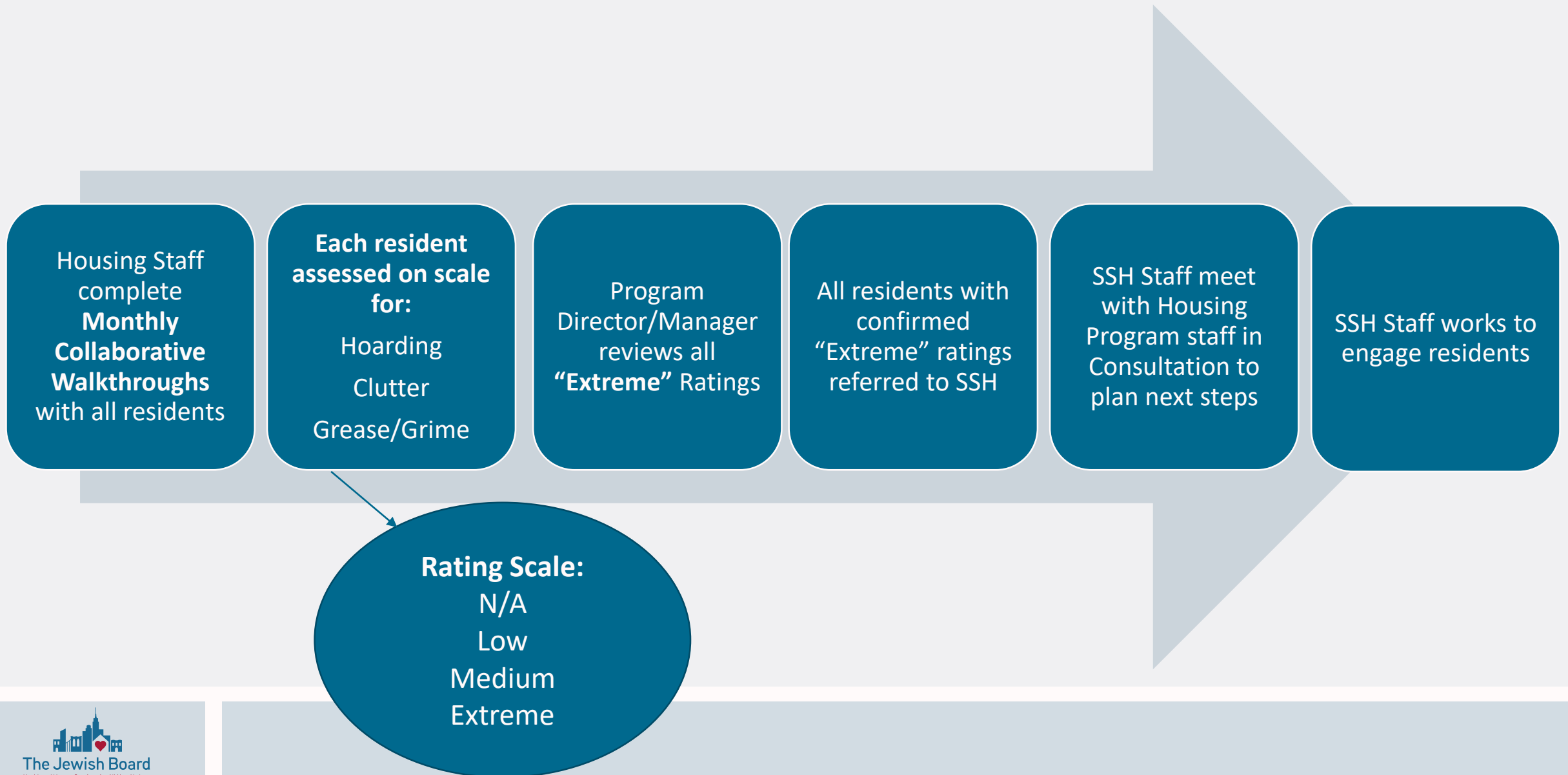
- Service provided once a month to all residents in supportive housing
- Tool for identifying, measuring or assessing, and resolving conditions in apartments
- Primary focus lies in ensuring resident's functioning, safety, and quality of life



Monthly Apartment Walkthroughs

- Performed using a collaborative model to engage with clients and build independent living skills
- Move toward guided practice by resident and independent walkthroughs
- Walkthroughs are linked with other recovery-oriented services the individual receives
- Connects residents to Safe and Secure Home for further support in apartments

Walkthroughs - Identifying Needs



Collaborative Walkthrough Model

The Benefits

- ✓ Improved resident capacity to manage living spaces and gain independence
- ✓ Increased staff knowledge and skill in working with residents
- ✓ Comprehensive awareness of all resident living conditions and EHS issues
- ✓ Reduce reliance on aesthetic reasoning and personal bias

What Makes It Work

- Residents and staff embrace process
- Effective metrics, data collection and follow up system for issues needing resolution
- Ongoing training, education and support
- Listening to resident and staff input to improve process

Understanding the Issues: Hoarding or Clutter?



Understanding Hoarding



Training Photos – *Hoarding in supportive housing typically not like sensationalized images in the media*

Hoarding – Starting with Empathy

Resident Voice *Shirley*

I have a lot on my mind. Just a lot of stress. Different things. Well you know, there are a lot of thoughts you know. And after last year, my parents' passing, I've been thinking a lot about them and their wishes. What they wanted for me and my family.

Insight and Understanding

Shirley has shared that many items in her home make her think of her family and signify for her comforting feelings of home, family, safety and love.

Understanding Hoarding

Hoarding Disorder (DSM-5)

- Excessive acquisition of stuff
- Difficulty discarding possessions
- Clutter compromises intended use of living areas
- Clutter causes significant distress and/or impairment

(APA, 2013)

Hoarding Behaviors

Acquiring

- Passive or Active
- Buying, free things, family items

Difficulty Discarding

- Intense attachment to large number of items

Disorganization

- Random piles
- Visual organization

Saving (Values)

- Sentimental
- Instrumental/Usefulness
- Intrinsic/Monetary

Cluttering Behavior (when not hoarding)

Lack of compulsive acquiring

Often passive accumulation or lack of discarding

Disorganization

Often related to mental health symptoms – difficulty focusing

Lack of intense attachment

With support, able to discard without intense distress

Impact

Can still cause distress and impair functioning

Assessment

Clutter Image Rating

Frost, Steketee, Tolin,
Renaud (2007)

*Readily available free
on-line and as an app.*

This image from
hoarding.iocdf.org

Clutter Image Rating: Bedroom

Please select the photo that most accurately reflects the amount of clutter in your room.



1



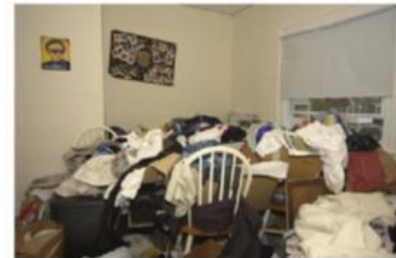
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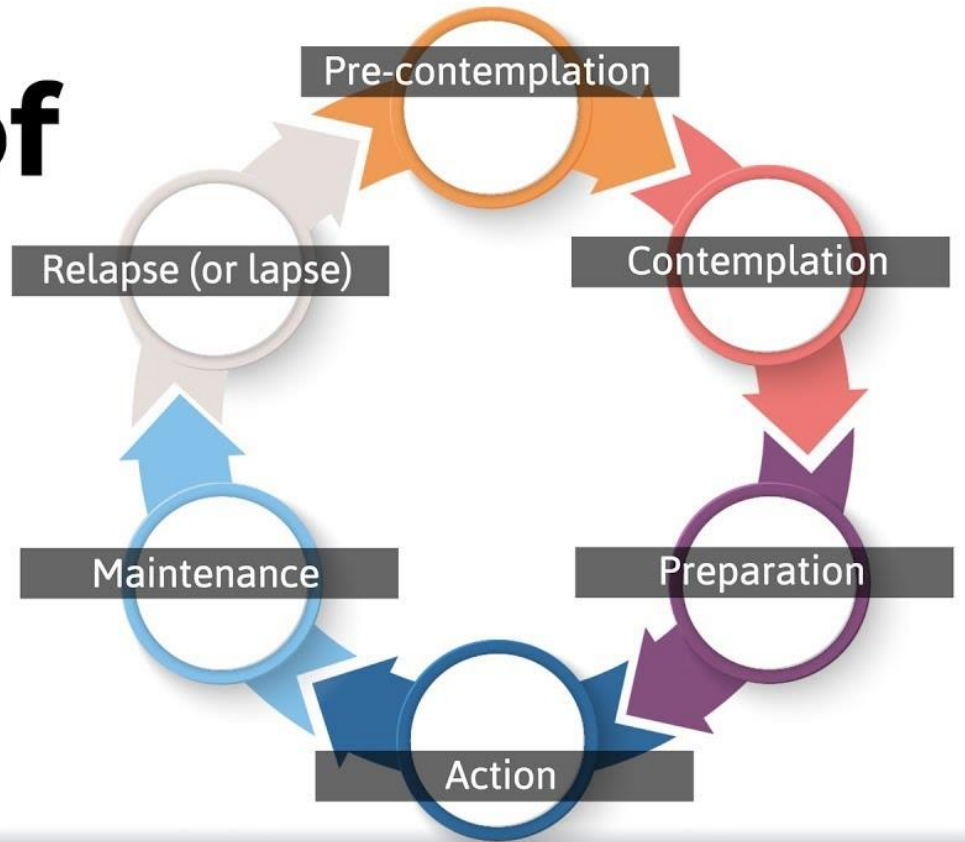
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The Safe and Secure Home Program Model



Guiding Frameworks

Stages of change



- Working at individual's pace
- Understanding each person's behavior – the “why”

Guiding Frameworks

Trauma-informed Care

- ❑ Seeking to create a safe and supportive space at all times

Harm Reduction

- ❑ Emphasis on reducing risk and sustainable environmental health and safety

Safe and Secure Home - Staffing

Social Worker/Intern

- ✓ Assessments
- ✓ Counseling
- ✓ Goal Setting – Action Plans
- ✓ Strengthening cognitive/emotional skills
- ✓ Addressing barriers

Home-Based Specialist

- ✓ In-Home, Hands-on assistance
- ✓ Actualizing Goals
- ✓ Goal Setting – Action Plans
- ✓ Modelling and teaching practical skills
- ✓ Support and encouragement



Residential Safety Coordinator

- ✓ Coordinate Apartment Walkthroughs
- ✓ Monitor safety issues across Division
- ✓ Provide support and consultation to programs
- ✓ Provide individual and group fire safety education to residents



SSH Assessments – Measuring Change

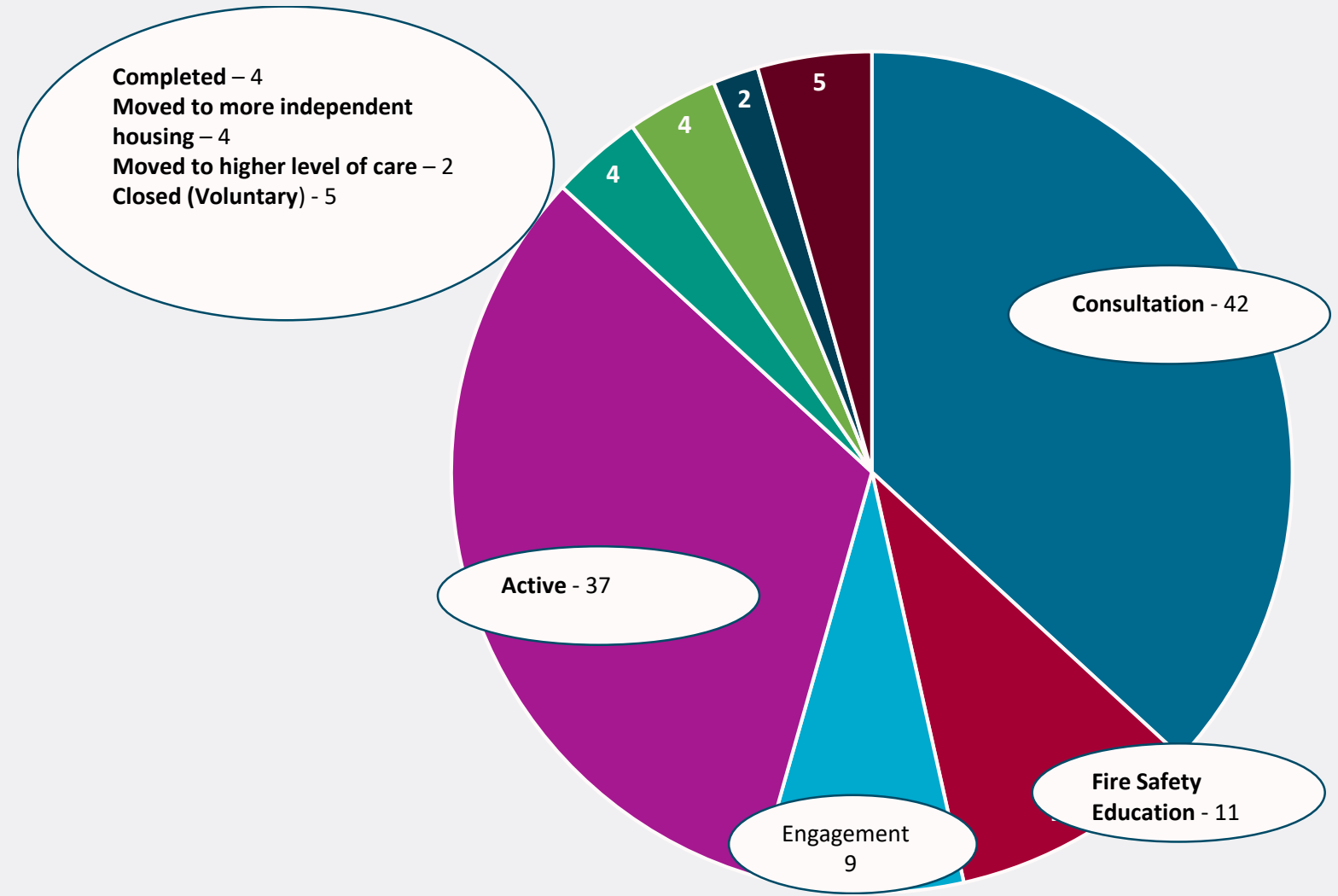
Assessment Tools	What it Does
Clinical Assessment	Learn about living space issues and what resident wants
Stages of Change Assessment	Measures and tracks client progress through program phases
Living Space Assessment	Objective and detailed assessment of client apartment conditions
Action Plans	Very specific and attainable goals set by client; guides work in apartment
Sustainability Plans	Long-term plans for maintaining apartment health and safety with supports

Outcomes – Change is Possible!



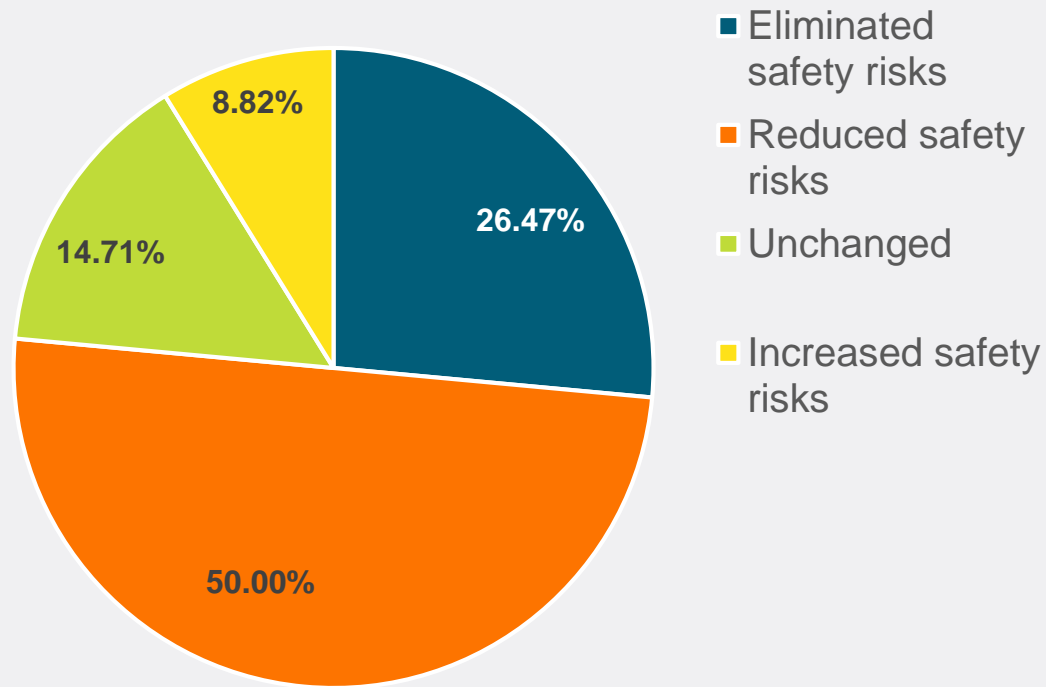
Clients Served and Current Status

**114 residents
served
August 2019 –
April 2022**

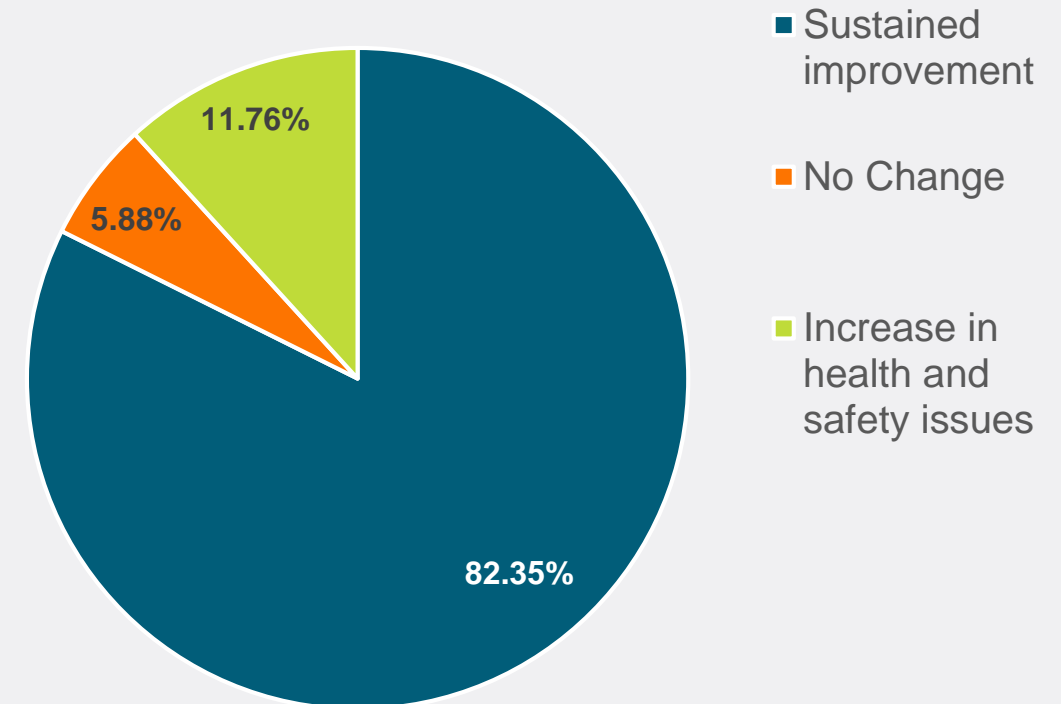


Outcomes – As of April 2022

Safety Assessment



Living Space Assessment



Strategies that Work!



What Helps – Resident Voices

Rachel



Essentials – Relationship and Trust

Engagement, Engagement!

Trust is Essential

Always Be Non-Judgmental

- Manage your reactions-verbal and non-verbal communication in home visits
- Avoid labels and negative terms like “Hoarder”

Be Curious and Interested

Ask open-ended questions – interest in the person and their living space builds comfort

Patience and Time

- Progress often not linear
- Give power and choice whenever you can
- Ask for permission before acting
- Rolling with Resistance

Essentials – Doing the Work

Find Each Person's Motivation

What will get someone working – small and immediate or long-term?

Live Goals

- Very specific and attainable
- Refer to often
- Use to guide work and in decision making

Getting Started!

Taking the first small steps can make all the difference

Break Down Big Tasks into Small Steps

- Help resident see change is possible
- Antidote to feeling overwhelmed and helpless
- Help resident focus on one task/area of the home at a time
- Set a work time limit – use phone timer

Lots of Encouragement!

- Celebrate all progress, not matter how small
- Always thank residents for their time and work

Essentials – Doing the Work

Sorting Strategy

- Focused area or theme
- Time-limited
- Helping person focus on individual items

Keep

- Don't critique
- Can inquire selectively what makes the person want to save an item

Discard/give away

- Don't critique or question
- If possible, help it happen asap

Maybe/Think About

- Engage in discussion about decision and debate

Essentials – Supporting Change

Measure and Track Progress

- Clutter Image Rating Scale, other assessment tool and/or photos
- Make measuring progress a collaborative exercise
- Recognize incremental change

Lots of Support

This work is challenging and can be frustrating. Staff need support!

- Training
- Supervision
- Acknowledgement
- Supplies

Essentials - Practical Tips and Tools

What You Always Need

- Time to prepare (take a breath)
- Clothing that fits the work
- Good shoes!
- PPE – good quality gloves
- A positive and optimistic attitude 😊

Useful Tools

- Tape measure** – 3-foot pathways for safe egress
- Roll or brightly colored tape**
 - Mark pathways
 - Mark level of clutter to track progress
 - Section off area to work on
- Disposable table cloths** – can be used to help reduce distraction by covering clutter not the focus at the time
- Clutter Image Rating Scale** - Phone app
- Incentives** – consider system of recognizing goal attainment

Last Word

In reflecting progress she has made over the past year

“It feels amazing. Like sort of, refreshing you know. Because before, I was a little stuck, everything was in these bags, and I would just look at everything. And now, I want to do more, I am seeing there is a lot more I could do.”

Shirley

Safe and Secure Home



Questions?