



Boston University School of Social Work
Institute for Geriatric Social Work

Compulsive Hoarding Among Older Adults

Course Description

Compulsive Hoarding in Older Adults is an introductory course that provides basic information needed by social service practitioners in their work with older adults who exhibit hoarding behaviors. The goal of this course is to provide practitioners with a better understanding of the possible causes of compulsive hoarding, its trajectory, and how it affects the individual's behavior and ability to function within the home and community. The course discusses assessment tools, as well as the methods of treatment and intervention that researchers and social service providers are developing in their work with compulsive hoarders. Case studies provide concrete examples of how hoarding behaviors may be manifested and treated. There is material available for downloading throughout the course.

Course Learning Objectives

1. Assess the research findings on compulsive hoarding.
2. Describe some obstacles in identifying the causes of compulsive hoarding.
3. Identify the behavioral manifestations of compulsive hoarding among older adults.
4. Describe the practitioner's role in working with cases of compulsive hoarding among older adults.
5. Describe the intervention strategies used by practitioners with compulsive hoarders.
6. Identify the resource and referral sources available to social service practitioners in their work with older compulsive hoarders.

Course Competencies

The Institute for Geriatric Social Work utilizes a competency-based approach to course development. The content and structure of each course are designed to address the knowledge, skills, and values essential for competent practice in the course topic area. The purpose of such an approach is to enhance the application of training material to your professional practice. Social work practice is complex, and competence requires professional judgment and critical thinking to translate knowledge, skills, and values into effective practice behaviors.

1. Knowledge

- Summarize current literature describing the prevalence, course, and features of compulsive hoarding in older adults.
- Identify social work intervention options and current treatment approaches, including challenges to treating older adults.

2. Skills

- Assess competency as it relates to the issues of hoarding and self-care.
- Develop and understand compulsive hoarding intervention strategy.
- Understand intervention implementation as it relates specifically to hoarding.
- Identify key agency/community organizations of assistance with hoarding problems.

3. Values

- Understand the ethical dilemmas that may arise in seeking to balance the protection of the individual and community with respect for the self-determination of the older adult.
- Understand the vulnerabilities of older adults within the context of the larger community.
- Understand the limitations of interventions in cases of hoarding behaviors.