

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Saginaw Hoarding Task Force Announces Website

SAGINAW, MI – The Saginaw County Community Mental Health Authority (SCCMHA), on behalf of the Saginaw Hoarding Task Force, is pleased to announce the existence of a new website offering information about hoarding disorders and resources. The website address is:

www.hoardingtaskforcesaginaw.org.

The Saginaw Hoarding Task Force convened in May of 2015. Various public and private community partners – including first responders, housing code enforcement officials, and home visiting agencies, as well as other agencies and organizations – joined together and agreed to form the Task Force and begin work on plans to address hoarding situations in Saginaw County. “The Task Force members initiated our effort with our own self-education about hoarding conditions,” states Sandra Lindsey, SCCMHA CEO, who is facilitating the Task Force. “We all needed to learn about our experiences, needs and resources, and then organize some cooperative interventions that would start to address these circumstances. As the mental health authority, we had to seek out the evidence-based treatment to help persons with this very unique and persistent mental health condition, and then we had to train some of our clinicians to be able to effectively offer specific support and intervention.” “The Saginaw Hoarding Task Force is truly a collaborative effort. We quickly learned in our early meetings that many of us through our routine work in the community had encountered the same homes where hoarding conditions existed, but we were not coordinating with each other, nor did we have collective processes in place to effectively support the person and seek to address the hoarding behavior.”

Hoarding creates significant health and safety risks for not only the person(s) in the home, but also neighborhoods and communities. Hoarding is characterized by the increasing inability to use functional spaces of the residential setting due to the accumulated clutter, resulting in public health concerns, personal safety issues, and egress and exit challenges for residents and visitors alike, including first responders.

“Hoarding behavior creates significant fire risks. I am pleased that the Task Force has included fire prevention and fire risk information as part of the hoarding awareness effort and content on the website,” comments Fire Chief Chris Van Loo of the Saginaw Fire Department. Another Task Force member, Randy Pfau, Executive Director of Saginaw County 9-1-1 Authority adds, “We have added premise hazard detail in our system for officials to identify addresses when

hoarding conditions exist. This will not only help first responders as well as the residents, but will also assist all of us to know how significant this issue is across the county, and who we need to reach out to in our communities, and who needs help with this condition to improve their living situations. We can also dispatch first responders to conduct well-being checks when indicated.” Angelic Zizumbo, Code Enforcement Officer for Saginaw Charter Township is also serving on the Task Force, and is excited that housing code officials will have collaborative supports in these situations. “Our role is to enforce housing code requirements in our respective municipalities, but we don’t want to just issue fines or take individuals to court for violations if they have a hoarding disorder which is a mental health condition. We want to have a role in supporting them to get help to improve their living conditions in order to live in safe and healthy homes.” Adds Sandra Lindsey, “Our resources are still limited at this point, but we are starting to offer interventions where we are able, and the Task Force will continue to focus on identifying more service options wherever we can, as we work to better identify the scope of this specific need for citizens in our county. The website will help us to get the word out and offer hope to those who are impacted by this condition, and let people know that actions can be taken to reduce risk and improve living conditions.”

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Saginaw County Community Mental Health Authority is headquartered at 500 Hancock Street in Saginaw. SCCMHA provides numerous services including evaluations, screenings, treatment and referrals. In 2015, SCCMHA assisted more than 6,000 Saginaw County citizens.