

CLUTTER-HOARDING SCALE[®]

a residential observational tool

FIVE LEVELS. FIVE CATEGORIES.



INSTITUTE FOR
CHALLENGING
DISORGANIZATION[®]

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C-HS[®] QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE IS ALSO AVAILABLE! Visit
www.challengingdisorganization for more information

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This document is to be used as an assessment/guideline tool only. The Institute for Challenging Disorganization is not responsible for any work performed by a professional organizer or other related professional when using the Clutter–Hoarding Scale®.

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SCOPE OF THE SCALE

For Use in Residential Observational Assessments

The Institute for Challenging Disorganization (ICD) developed the *Clutter-Hoarding Scale*® (C-HS®) to serve as an observational guideline tool for the assessment of residential environments, and is intended for the assessment of the household environment only.

- The C-HS® was created specifically for use in the assessment of a home's interior, except where the outside structure affects the overall safety of the interior.
- The C-HS® is not intended for the assessment of sheds, unattached garages or outbuildings.
- The C-HS® is not to be used for diagnostic purposes or for any psychological evaluation of a person or persons.
- ICD is not responsible for any work performed by a professional organizer, related professional, or any other person when using the C-HS®.

For Use as a Guideline Tool by Professional Organizers, Related Professionals and Collaborating Team Members

The C-HS® provides definitive assessment parameters relating to health and safety issues, and presents a potential range of environments in which professional organizers, related professionals and others might choose to work.

ICD acknowledges and defines the following categories of support providers that the C-HS® may serve:

Professional Organizers

Professional organizers are those who receive remuneration for organizing services, maintain professional standards and ethics defined by association affiliations, and continually educate themselves in the organizing field and/or specialty areas.

Related Professionals

Related professionals are those whose professional relationships with individuals specifically target issues of challenging disorganization. Related professionals include, but are not limited to psychiatrists, psychologists, physicians, nurses, health department professionals, social workers, educators, researchers, municipal planners and code enforcers, and ADD/ADHD coaches.

Collaborating Team Members

Collaborating team members may include any combination of professional organizers, related professionals, therapists, coaches, family members and community service agencies. All those whose professional or personal relationships with an individual involve them in the process of creating and maintaining environmental change in the home are considered collaborating team members.



ICD is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) educational organization. ICD's mission is to provide education, research, and strategies to benefit people challenged by chronic disorganization.

PARAMETERS OF THE SCALE

Five Levels

ICD has established five levels to indicate the degree of household clutter and/or hoarding from the perspective of a professional organizer or related professional.

The levels in the scale are progressive, with Level I as the lowest and Level V the highest. ICD considers Level III to be the pivot point between a household that might be assessed as cluttered and a household assessment that may require the deeper considerations of working in a hoarding environment.

LEVEL	COLOR	LEVEL OF CLUTTER-HOARDING
I	GREEN	LOW
II	BLUE	GUARDED
III	YELLOW	ELEVATED
IV	ORANGE	HIGH
V	RED	SEVERE

Five Assessment Categories

Within each level are five specific categories that describe the degree of clutter and/or hoarding potential.

1. Structure and Zoning

Assessment of access to entrances and exits; function of plumbing, electrical, HVAC (any aspect of heating, ventilation or air conditioning) systems and appliances; and structural integrity

2. Animals and Pests

Assessment of animal care and control; compliance with local animal regulations; assessment for evidence of infestations of pests (rodents, insects or other vermin)

3. Household Functions

Assessment of safety, functionality and accessibility of rooms for intended purposes

4. Health and Safety

Assessment of sanitation levels in household; household management of medications for prescribed (Rx) and/or over-the-counter (OTC) drugs

5. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Recommendations for PPE (face masks, gloves, eye shields or clothing that protect wearer from environmental health and safety hazards); additional supplies as appropriate to observational level

LEVEL I

GREEN

LOW

Household environment is considered standard. No special knowledge in working with the chronically disorganized is necessary.

Structure and Zoning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> All doors, stairways and windows accessible <input type="checkbox"/> All plumbing, electrical, HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning) systems fully functional <input type="checkbox"/> Installed and functional fire and carbon monoxide (CO) detectors
Animals and Pests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate animal control (behavior and sanitation) <input type="checkbox"/> Number of animals in compliance with zoning regulations <input type="checkbox"/> No evidence of non-pet rodents or insects
Household Functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> No excessive clutter <input type="checkbox"/> All rooms being used for intended purposes <input type="checkbox"/> All household appliances fully functional <input type="checkbox"/> Consistent routine housekeeping and maintenance
Health and Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Safe and maintained sanitation conditions <input type="checkbox"/> No odors (animal, food or natural gas) <input type="checkbox"/> Medications: quantity within normal limits; appropriately stored, current dates and child-proof lids as indicated
Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> PPE Optional <input type="checkbox"/> First aid kit, hand sanitizer, flashlight and insect repellent

LEVEL II

BLUE

GUARDED

Household environment requires professional organizers or related professionals who have additional knowledge and understanding of chronic disorganization.

Structure and Zoning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One major exit blocked • One major appliance or HVAC device not working for longer than one season (regionally appropriate) • Some plumbing or electrical systems not fully functional • Nonexistent or non-functional fire and carbon monoxide (CO) detectors
Animals and Pests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animals: evidence of inappropriate animal control (behavior and sanitation) • Visible or odorous pet waste • Visible pet fur/hair/feathers • Light to medium evidence of common household pests/insects
Household Functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clutter obstructs some functions of key living areas • Slight congestion of exits, entrances, hallways and stairs • Some household appliances not fully functional • Inconsistent routine housekeeping and maintenance
Health and Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of non-maintained sanitation conditions • Odors related to dirty dishes, food preparation surfaces, laundry, toilets; mildew in bathroom or kitchen • Medications: quantities questionable; expired, current Rx and OTC commingled; haphazard storage; pills not in Rx containers
Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Light PPE: as needed and suggested • Medical or industrial grade latex or nitrile gloves and heavy-duty leather or cloth work gloves with reinforced palms • Caps (such as baseball) or disposable polyester bouffant caps • Disposable shoe covers • First aid kit, hand sanitizer, flashlight and insect repellent

LEVEL III

YELLOW

ELEVATED

ICD considers Level III to be the pivot point between a household environment that can be assessed as cluttered and a household assessment that may require the deeper considerations of working in a hoarding environment. Professional organizers, related professionals or others who are working with Level III household environments should have significant training in chronic disorganization and have developed a helpful community network of resources, especially mental health professionals.

Structure and Zoning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outside clutter of items normally stored indoors • HVAC devices not working for longer than one season (regionally appropriate) • Nonexistent or non-functional fire and carbon monoxide (CO) detectors • One part of home exhibits light structural damage (having occurred in preceding six months)
Animals and Pests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animal population exceeds local legal regulations • Evidence of inappropriate animal control • Inadequate sanitation (fish tank stagnant, reptile aquarium not well maintained, animal odor and waste, bird droppings) • Audible evidence of pests; medium level of spider webs in house • Light insect infestation (bed bugs, lice, fleas, cockroaches, ants, silverfish, etc.)
Household Functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clutter obstructing functions of key living areas • Clutter exists around exits, entrances, hallways and stairs • At least one room not being used for intended purpose, e.g., items stored in shower; limited bed access or space • Several appliances not fully functional • Inappropriate usage of electric appliances and extension cords • Substandard housekeeping and maintenance • One or two obvious hazardous materials in small quantities, such as chemical spills, broken glass, etc.
Health and Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of non-maintained sanitation conditions (food preparation surfaces heavily soiled, dirty dishes, dirty toilets, visible mildew in bathroom or kitchen) • Odors obvious and irritating • Garbage cans not in use, full or overflowing • Presence of accumulated dust, dirt and debris • Dirty laundry scattered throughout the house • Medications: Rx and OTC easily accessible to people and pets; presence of expired Rx medications
Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium PPE • Face masks: surgical mask or healthcare particulate respirator mask • Eye protection and gloves: eyeglasses, safety goggles, medical or industrial grade latex or nitrile gloves; work gloves with reinforced palms • Disposable coveralls, polyester bouffant caps, work shoes/boots • First aid kit, hand sanitizer, flashlight and insect repellent

LEVEL IV

ORANGE

HIGH

Household environment requires a coordinated collaborative team of service providers in addition to professional organizers and family. Such providers might include mental health professionals, social workers, financial counselors, pest and animal control officers, crime scene cleaners, licensed contractors and handypersons. Mental health and/or medical and financial issues are frequently involved.

Structure and Zoning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Excessive outdoor clutter of items normally stored indoors HVAC devices not working for longer than one year Nonexistent or non-functional fire and carbon monoxide (CO) detectors Structural damage to home existing longer than six months Water damaged floors, damaged walls and foundations, broken windows, doors or plumbing Odor or evidence of sewer backup
Animals and Pests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Animal population exceeds local ordinances Evidence of poor animal sanitation; destructive behavior Excessive spiders and webs Bats, squirrels, rodents in attic or basement (audible and visible) Medium insect infestation (bedbugs, lice, fleas, cockroaches, ants, silverfish, etc.)
Household Functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diminished use of and accessibility to key living areas Several rooms cluttered to extent they cannot be used for intended purposes, e.g., items stored in shower; limited bed access or space Clutter inhibits access to exits, entrances, hallways and stairs Inappropriate storage of hazardous/combustible materials, e.g., gasoline, leaking paint or chemicals Appliances used inappropriately, e.g., refrigerator being used for storing non-food items Improper use of electric space heaters, fans or extension cords
Health and Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rotting food, organic contamination Expired, leaking or buckling cans and/or jars Dishes and utensils unusable No linens on beds; sleeping on mattress, chair or floor; infestation of bedding and/or furniture Mold and/or mildew obvious; visible moisture or standing water Medications: Rx and OTC easily accessible to people and pets; presence of expired Rx medications
Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full PPE Face masks: surgical mask, healthcare particulate respirator mask, or respirator with organic filter(s) Safety goggles; medical or industrial grade latex or nitrile gloves; heavy duty work gloves Disposable coveralls, caps, and shoe covers; work shoes/boots First aid kit, hand sanitizer, headlamp/flashlight and insect repellent

LEVEL V	RED	SEVERE
<p>Household environment will require intervention from a wide range of professionals. Professional organizers should not work alone in a Level V environment. A collaborative team of related professionals needs to be assembled to create and implement clearly defined goals and negotiated timetables. Members might include family, mental health professionals, social workers, building manager, zoning, fire, and/or safety agents. The individual with a Level V home might be involved in legal proceedings, such as a conservatorship, guardianship, divorce, custody, eviction or condemnation proceedings. Formal written agreements among the parties should be in place before proceeding.</p>		
<p>Structure and Zoning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Extreme indoor/outdoor clutter; foliage overgrowth; abandoned machinery <input type="checkbox"/> Inadequate or nonexistent ventilation; HVAC systems not working <input type="checkbox"/> Non-existent or non-functional fire and carbon monoxide (CO) detectors <input type="checkbox"/> Water damaged floors, walls and foundation; broken windows, doors or plumbing <input type="checkbox"/> Unreliable electrical, water, and/or sewer septic systems; odor or evidence of sewer backup <input type="checkbox"/> Irreparable damage to exterior and interior structure <input type="checkbox"/> Nonexistent or non-functional fire and carbon monoxide (CO) detectors 	
<p>Animals and Pests</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Animals at risk and dangerous to people due to behavior, health and numbers <input type="checkbox"/> Pervasive spiders, mice, rats, squirrels, raccoons, bats, snakes, etc. <input type="checkbox"/> Heavy insect infestation (bed bugs, lice, fleas, cockroaches, ants, silverfish, etc.) 	
<p>Household Functions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Key living spaces not usable <input type="checkbox"/> All rooms not used for intended purposes <input type="checkbox"/> Exits, entrances, hallways and stairs blocked <input type="checkbox"/> Toilets, sinks and tubs not functioning <input type="checkbox"/> Hazardous conditions obscured by clutter <input type="checkbox"/> Appliances unusable <input type="checkbox"/> Hazardous and primitive use of kerosene, lanterns, candles, fireplace/woodstove as primary source of heat and/or light 	
<p>Health and Safety</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Human urine and excrement present <input type="checkbox"/> Rotting food; organic contamination; expired, leaking or buckled cans and/or jars <input type="checkbox"/> Dishes and utensils buried or nonexistent <input type="checkbox"/> Beds inaccessible or unusable due to clutter or infestation <input type="checkbox"/> Pervasive mold and/or mildew; moisture or standing water <input type="checkbox"/> Medications: Rx and OTC easily accessible to people and pets; presence of expired Rx medications 	
<p>Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Full PPE required <input type="checkbox"/> Face masks: healthcare particulate respirator mask or respirator with organic filter(s) <input type="checkbox"/> Safety goggles; medical or industrial grade latex or nitrile gloves; heavy duty gloves <input type="checkbox"/> Disposable coveralls, caps and shoe covers; work shoes/boots <input type="checkbox"/> First aid kit, hand sanitizer, headlamp/flashlight and insect repellent 	

ADDITIONAL ICD RESOURCES

The ICD website contains additional resources on subject matter related to the C-HS® and to challenges with disorganization.

Please go to <http://www.challengingdisorganization.org>

- **RESOURCES** (on the purple ribbon at the top)
 - **Clutter Quality of Life Scale (CQLS)**
 - **Fact Sheets** on such topics as hoarding, the elderly, time management, ADHD, mental health issues, medical health issues, family dynamics, grief, goal setting and more.
- **FIND AN ORGANIZER**
 - Online directory to help you locate ICD®-educated professional organizers (click on the green button on the right side of the page)

