



## Frequently Asked Questions

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### What is CARE Court?

**Community Assistance, Recovery, and Empowerment (CARE) Court** helps people with untreated schizophrenia or other associated psychotic disorders receive treatment and services to promote their recovery and well-being. Participants can receive many kinds of support, which may include counseling, medication, housing options, social services, and other resources.

Rather than cycling through jails or emergency rooms, CARE Court gives vulnerable individuals (and those who care for them) another pathway to access key services in the community. Family members, roommates, clinicians, and others can file a petition to the court to request and seek approval for this assistance.

The Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (LACDMH) is pleased to offer CARE Court as part of an extended menu of programs to provide mental health assistance for those who need it.

### What Services Does CARE Provide?

A team of experts, including doctors, counselors, case managers, and others, works with each participant to create a CARE plan—a personalized treatment plan that meets their specific needs. The CARE plan offers a year of support, such as counseling, medication, housing options, social services, and more. A CARE plan is NOT a conservatorship, and those taking part still have the ability to make their own decisions about participating in the program, whether to take medication, and other aspects of their care.

### Who is Eligible to Participate?

The CARE program is meant to help adults experiencing **specific types** of severe, untreated mental illnesses.

To be eligible for the CARE program, participants **must** be:

- 18 years or older
- Diagnosed with schizophrenia or other associated psychotic disorders
- Currently experiencing behaviors & symptoms associated with that severe mental illness
- Not receiving on-going voluntary treatment

To learn more about whether your loved one is eligible for CARE and ask further questions, please visit [dmh.lacounty.gov/care-court](https://dmh.lacounty.gov/care-court) or call 1-800-854-7771. **Please take the time to learn about eligibility BEFORE moving forward with the official petition process.**

Not everyone will qualify for the CARE program. However, the LACDMH provides [many additional programs](#) that can help.

## What if Someone Doesn't Qualify for CARE?

If someone you know needs help, there are many resources out there to keep them safe and support their well-being.

- **Call or text 988** for the Suicide and Crisis lifeline for mental health-related distress.
- **Call 1-800-854-7771 (24/7 Help Line)** for crisis response teams in the field or mental health resources through the LACDMH.
- **Text "LA" to 741741** to connect with a trained crisis counselor to receive free crisis support via text message.

Additional resources and helplines are available on the LACDMH Get Help Now! page at [dmh.lacounty.gov/get-help-now](https://dmh.lacounty.gov/get-help-now)

## How Does the CARE Process Work?

### STEP ONE

#### REFERRAL

The process begins when a family member, roommate, clinician, or other eligible person [files a CARE Act petition](#) referring someone who needs help to the CARE program.

### STEP TWO

#### ASSESSMENT

The court appoints a legal representative and will ask to include a client-chosen supporter to help the potential participant navigate the process. A clinical team will meet with the client in the community to determine whether they are eligible to take part in the CARE program.

### STEP THREE

#### DEVELOPING A CARE PLAN

If a person is deemed eligible for the CARE program, a CARE team (that may include clinicians, case managers, people with lived experience, and others) works with each participant to create a personalized treatment plan (that may include housing options, medications, counseling, and other resources) and help with supportive decision making (which may include topics like a Psychiatric Advance Directive—a legal document that can be used by a person with mental illness to say what their treatment preferences are in case of a crisis). Review hearings will be scheduled periodically to assess the participant's progress and ensure services are offered quickly.

### STEP FOUR

#### COMPLETION

Participants receive services for up to one year, which the court can renew for an additional year, if needed. At 11 months, CARE Court holds a one-year status hearing to determine whether the plan's services and resources should be extended for up to 12 more months.

### STEP FIVE

#### NEXT STEPS

The participant can continue with treatment, supportive services, and housing options in the community to support long-term recovery, even after they are no longer a CARE participant. Their supportive-decision-making materials can also stay in place for any future use.

## Who Can File a CARE Petition?

Petitioners must be at least 18 years old and related to participant as a:

- Family member, roommate, or legally appointed guardian
- Licensed behavioral health professional who supervised their treatment in the last month
- Representative of a hospital, county behavioral health agency, public or charitable organization or home, California Indian health services program, or tribal behavioral health program who has recently provided services to the participant
- First responder—such as a paramedic, emergency medical technician, homeless outreach worker, mobile crisis response worker, police officer, or firefighter—who has had multiple interactions with the participant
- California tribal court judge
- Member of a county behavioral health, adult protective services or public guardian office
- The potential participant themselves

## What Resources are Available for Petitioners?

- [Information for Petitioners](#)
- [Petition to Commence CARE Act Proceedings \(CARE-100\) Form](#)
- [Superior Court of Los Angeles Self Help Site](#)

## Where can I file a CARE Act petition? Where does CARE Court take place?

CARE Act petitions can be filed online, in person at the Norwalk Courthouse or at Self Help Centers across Los Angeles County. Participants can attend hearings in person at the Norwalk Courthouse or remotely, and dedicated private spaces for remote appearances are available at all Self Help Centers—see [lacourt.org/CARE](http://lacourt.org/CARE) for a map of locations.

## What Rights Do Participants Have?

The CARE program is strictly voluntary. Its goal is to help residents get the support they need in the least restrictive way possible. CARE protects participants' rights to make their own decisions, giving them free legal representation and allowing them to select a supporter who can encourage and help advocate with them throughout the process. Participants cannot be forced to participate in services against their will (including taking medication) and can leave the program at any time.

## Is There Any Cost to Participate in the CARE Program?

There are no costs to individuals to file a CARE Act petition. For participants, once their CARE plan is developed, a number of factors will be taken into consideration, including their ability to pay, MediCare/Medi-Cal eligibility, and access to resources through private insurance. Participants will need to check with their providers to determine their potential share of costs. No one will be turned away because of their inability to pay or insurance type.

## What Happens if a Participant Chooses to Leave the Program Without Completing Their CARE Plan?

There are no civil or criminal penalties for choosing not to participate. Participants who choose to leave the program remain eligible for a wide range of other [mental health programs](#). Depending on their individual needs and circumstances, they could also be referred to other resources or programs by LACDMH team members.

## How Can I Learn More About CARE?

To learn more about CARE and other resources to help people with severe mental illness, visit: [dmh.lacounty.gov/care-court](http://dmh.lacounty.gov/care-court)