



CARE Court – A New Mental Health Resource: Fostering Recovery and Empowerment

Updated: 11.16.2023

What is CARE Court?

People in our community experience severe mental illness and may not receive regular help, often resulting in homelessness and substance use. Their loved ones and other caregivers often struggle to find lifesaving support and assistance.

The County of Los Angeles is launching a new, state-funded program called **Community Assistance, Recovery, and Empowerment (CARE) Court**, which helps people with untreated schizophrenia or other associated psychotic disorders receive treatment and services for 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 and emergency rooms, CARE Court gives vulnerable individuals (and those who care for them) another path to access key services in the community. Family members, roommates, clinicians, and others can petition the court to seek approval for this program.

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, people with lived experience, and others, works with each participant to create a CARE plan—a personalized treatment plan that meets their specific needs. The CARE plan may include many kinds of support, which may include counseling, medication, housing options, social services, and other resources. A CARE plan is NOT a conservatorship, and those taking part still have the ability to express their own preferences about treatment and 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 the CARE program and ask further questions, please visit 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.

How Can I Start the CARE Process?



The process begins when a family member, roommate, clinician, or other eligible person files a CARE Act petition. A judge determines whether the potential participant meets the criteria for the CARE program.

If the participant is accepted into the CARE program, their CARE team works with them to develop a plan that will provide services tailored to their needs. The plan will provide the individual services for up to a year, which can be extended by another year if chosen or needed. Review hearings will be scheduled periodically to assess the participant's progress and ensure services are provided quickly.

What Rights Do Participants Have?

The program is strictly voluntary. CARE's goal is to help residents get the support they need in the least restrictive way possible. It protects participants' rights to make their own decisions, giving them free legal representation and allowing them to choose a supporter who can help them navigate the process. Participants cannot be forced to participate in services against their will (including taking medication) and can leave the program at any time. There are no civil or criminal penalties for choosing not to participate in the CARE process or programs.



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 Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health.

**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

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