

CARE Court: A New Mental Health Resource

CARE Court is a state-funded program 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, such as **counseling, medication, housing options, social services**, and more.

The program is strictly voluntary. Eligible individuals are not required to participate and can opt out of various services at any time.

If your loved one is not eligible for CARE Court, the Department of Mental Health has many other services and programs for support.

What Happens After Filing a Petition

CARE Court is not available to everyone. If you believe your loved one is eligible for the program, you can apply for the program on their behalf.

Step 1 – Family members, roommates, clinicians, and others can submit what is referred to as a “petition” requesting the court to assess the eligibility of an individual to participate.

You can receive in-person support to file a petition by visiting any of the twelve [CARE Court service locations](#) throughout the county.

Step 2 – The court reviews the petition promptly to determine if the respondent (the person who may need help) is likely to be eligible. If they are, or if more information is needed, the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (LACDMH) has up to 28 calendar days (about six weeks) to attempt to contact them and make a report. The court has the discretion to extend this time, which is often necessary.

The process of locating, contacting, building trust and rapport and engaging can take time, and ultimately depends on the voluntary participation of the respondent.

Step 3 – Once the respondent is engaged, the court will hold a hearing to determine whether they can participate in CARE Court. **The petitioner is required to appear at this initial hearing.**

The respondent’s participation in CARE Court is strictly voluntary. They cannot be forced to appear. If they do consent to participate in CARE Court, they can choose a formal “supporter” who can help them throughout the process – the “supporter” will officially be recognized by the court.

What Role Will I Play During the CARE Court Process?

After submitting a petition and attending the initial hearing, your role as the petitioner is completed. Representatives from LACDMH will now take responsibility for the duration of the case.

How Can I Find Out More Information About the Status of the Petition and Whether My Loved One Is Receiving Services?

CARE Court respondents have the same legal rights to privacy about their care and medical treatment information as any other adult.

LACDMH takes the right to privacy seriously, and we do everything to safeguard the privacy of those who take part in this process. The respondent has the right to decide whether they want to share information about their care, CARE Plan and treatment, whom they wish to share it with, and how much information they want to share.

Unless the respondent chooses to share information with you, you will not be entitled to further updates about their case.

What Happens Next?

Even if the court determines the person to be eligible for CARE Court services, the person must choose to participate. Otherwise, the process will end.

If eligibility is approved AND the participant does want to take part in CARE Court, these are the next steps:

CARE PLAN: A team of experts, which can include clinicians, case managers, people with lived experience, and others, meets with the participant to create a personalized treatment plan and help with supportive decision-making. The treatment plan can include a variety of services based on their needs.

SUPPORT: CARE Court will have periodic check-ins with the participant to evaluate their progress and allow for changes to the CARE Plan and its services and resources to support healing and recovery.

COMPLETION: Participants receive services for up to one year. At 11 months, CARE Court holds a status hearing to determine whether the plan's services and supports should be extended for up to 12 more months.

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 program participant.

What Can I Do if the Petition Is Denied or if My Loved One Still Needs Help?

CARE Court is not meant for everyone. If a CARE Act petition is not accepted or the participant chooses not to take part in the program, there are many other ways to find support.

If someone you know needs help, please use the numbers below or visit the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (LACDMH) Get Help Now! page at dmh.lacounty.gov/get-help-now to find additional resources and helplines.

- **Call or text 988** to contact the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline for support with mental health-related distress.
- **Call 1-800-854-7771 (24/7 Help Line) or email CARECourt@dmh.lacounty.gov** 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.