

LOS ANGELES COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH

Community Assistance Recovery Empowerment Program (CARE): Program Update

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Thursday, October 9, 2025, 11:00am-1:30pm

Behavioral Health Commission

CARE Summary

CARE was successfully implemented in Los Angeles County on December 1, 2023.

Regional offices were established in each of the eight (8) Service Areas.

All Service Areas have the capacity to provide the full spectrum of CARE services.

The CARE process is a voluntary Civil Court proceeding which is collaborative and supportive in its approach.

The court proceedings are held at the Norwalk Courthouse, which also includes a legal self-help center.

CARE Court Overview

SB 1338 (CARE Act, 2022) - CARE Court framework

Targeted eligibility for people with schizophrenia-spectrum disorders who are unstable or decompensating

Referrals from family, clinicians, courts, CDCR, DSH, Public Guardian, emergency responders, hospitals, and more.

1-year court-monitored plan (extendable)

Emphasis on early intervention, diversion, and continuity of care

CARE Court Eligibility Requirements

Respondents must meet all the criteria to be eligible for CARE Court:

18 years of age or older.

Diagnosed within the "schizophrenia and other psychotic disorders" class and currently experiencing symptoms.

- **Bipolar Disorder with Psychotic Features** may be added soon.

Not clinically stabilized in ongoing treatment.

The individual's mental health is substantially deteriorating.

CARE Court Eligibility Requirements Cont.

The person is unlikely to survive safely in the community without support
AND/OR needs services to prevent relapse and deterioration.

Participation in a CARE Program is the least restrictive alternative and the individual is likely to benefit from participation in the CARE Program.

Although there is a court component to the CARE Program, participation is totally voluntary, and medication cannot be mandated.

Who Can Petition?

“FAMILY / HOME”

- Person with whom respondent resides
- Spouse, parent, sibling, child, grandparent or other individual in place of a parent
- **Respondent** (i.e., self-petition)
- **CARE Court** is the only program where families can directly petition the court for mental health treatment.



“COMMUNITY”

- **First responder** (e.g., peace officer, firefighter, paramedic, mobile crisis response, homeless outreach worker)
- **Director of a hospital**, or designee, in which respondent is hospitalized (including for 5150s, 5250s)
- **Licensed behavioral health professional**, or designee treating respondent for mental illness
- **Director of a public/charitable organization** providing behavioral health services or whose institution respondent resides



“COUNTY”

- **County behavioral health director**, or designee (e.g., DMH CARE-LA team)
- **Public guardian**, or designee
- **Director of adult protective services**, or designee



“TRIBAL JURISDICTION”

- **Director of a California Indian health services program**, California tribal behavioral health department, or designee
- **Judge of a tribal court** located in CA, or designee



How we Locate and Connect with the people you refer to CARE

In Person	Collateral	Review	Resources	Rapport
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conduct in-reach at jails or hospitals to engage clients prior to release	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Connect with collateral contacts (family, friends, service providers) for updated information	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review available medical and service records to help locate and understand client needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide resource packets with information and support options	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meet clients where they are – identify motivators (e.g., housing) to build trust and buy-in.

Petition Distribution

- ▶ Family Initiated Petitions: 416
- ▶ Non-Family Initiated Petitions: 190
 - Provider Network Initiated Petitions - 26
 - Self – 9
 - IST to CARE Court Pilot (State Hospitals) – 70
 - CDCR – 16
 - Other Referral Sources - 1
 - DMH Initiated Petitions: 68

Total Petitions: 606

Active Petitions: 362

Reason for Petition Dismissals

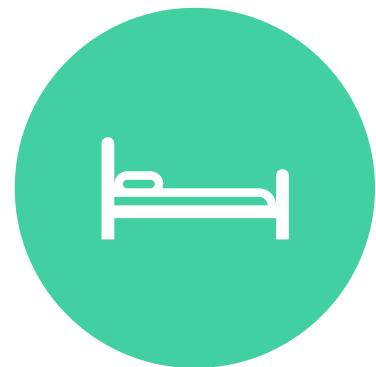
- ▶ Incarcerated: 19
- ▶ Deceased: 2
- ▶ Declined to Participate: 9
- ▶ Graduated (Care Plan/Agreement Completed): 3
- ▶ Impairment Criteria not Met: 2
- ▶ Petition Withdrawn: 5
- ▶ Petitioner did not Participate: 3
- ▶ Mets Criteria for AOT: 4
- ▶ Moved Out of County/Resides Out of LA County: 25
- ▶ Does not Meet CARE Court Criteria (Diagnosis): 36
- ▶ Unable to Locate Client: 12
- ▶ Client Stable in Current Treatment: 63
- ▶ Unlikely to benefit (Needs Higher Level of Care): 61

Total Dismissed: 244

CARE Data: Housing Status



HOUSED: 434



NOT HOUSED: 146



JUSTICE SYSTEM: 26

Program Outcomes

- ▶ CARE Agreements: 136
- ▶ CARE Plans: 4
- ▶ Respondent Initiated (Completed 12-month program but opted to extend in CARE Court): 10
- ▶ DMH Initiated (Completed 12-month program but DMH recommended an extension in CARE Court): 2
- ▶ Graduated (Completed CARE Court 12-month program): 3

Non-Petition DMH Referrals – Referral Sources

- ▶ PMRT/START/MET
- ▶ Full Service Partnership (FSP)
- ▶ Department of Health Services (DHS)
- ▶ Public Guardian
- ▶ Promoting Health Preventing Homelessness
- ▶ Court Linkage
- ▶ Hollywood 2.0
- ▶ DMH Outpatient Clinics/Legal Entities
- ▶ Harbor Interfaith
- ▶ HOME
- ▶ LAPD
- ▶ PIH Whittier Hospital
- ▶ DMH Enhanced Care Management
- ▶ Hollywood Mental Health Court
- ▶ Department of State Hospitals
- ▶ College Medical Center
- ▶ West Los Angeles VA Hospital
- ▶ McKinley Mental Health Facility
- ▶ Ventura County Behavioral Health
- ▶ Family
- ▶ Self

Total Non-Petition DMH Referrals: 284

SB 317

Number of Suitability Requests: 502

- ▶ SB 317, under 5978 (b) of the Welfare and Institutions Code states " A court may refer an individual from misdemeanor proceedings pursuant to section 1370.01 of the Penal Code to CARE Act proceedings."
- ▶ Judges at Hollywood Superior Court, commonly referred to as Mental Health Court, routinely refer Penal Code 1370.01 defendants to be evaluated by DMH's CARE Team as to their suitability to participate in the CARE Court Program.
- ▶ These are individuals who have committed a misdemeanor and have been deemed incompetent to stand trial.

Outreach & Linkage

- ▶ Self-Help Calls: 131
- ▶ Face to Face Consults at Court: 226
- ▶ Number of Structured Power Point Presentations: * 106
 - ▶ Total Number of Participants: 4,371
- ▶ Number of CARE Information Dissemination Events: ** 55
 - ▶ Total Number of Community Members: 6,345

* Tri-City Mental Health presentation included

** CARE Team members provided information at community events

BHC/ Stakeholder Listening Session

As a result of the listening session held on April 4, 2025, the following were key elements of feedback received:

- ▶ Concern regarding individuals who may be too impaired to benefit from the program
- ▶ Constraints and limits regarding confidentiality
- ▶ Pathways to higher levels of care
- ▶ Integration of family involvement and treatment

Strategies to Enhance the Program Reach

- CLOSELY COLLABORATING WITH THE FSP PROGRAMS THAT HAVE LIMITED CAPACITY FOR NEW CLIENTS
- OUTREACH AND TRAINING FOR FIRST RESPONDERS
- ENGAGING WITH THE HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION REGARDING A PILOT FOR HIGH UTILIZERS OF EMERGENCY DEPARTMENTS
- EXPLORING WITH MULTIPLE HOSPITALS A PATHWAY FOR FREQUENTLY INVOLUNTARILY HOSPITALIZED INDIVIDUALS TO ACCESS CARE COURT SERVICES
- HEIGHTENED VISIBILITY THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA
- EXPLORATION OF LEGISLATION
- PETITIONER/ FAMILY MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

CARE Court Office Hours

- ▶ All Languages Welcome
- ▶ All Petitioners receive an email in advance of the meetings
- ▶ Open to the Public via DMH Instagram post
- ▶ Can receive education, support, and guidance around the CARE Court process



Referral Pathway: Department of State Hospitals

- ▶ For clients restored to competency after being found incompetent to stand trial
- ▶ Petitions filed while still in custody
- ▶ Supports continuity during community reentry
- ▶ 59 petitions filed

Referral Pathway: California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation



Focus: parolees with histories of involuntary medication orders



Petitions often filed before release



Goal: prevent decompensation post-release



16 petitions filed

Referral Pathway: Public Guardian Step-Down

- ▶ Bi-weekly collaboration between PG and CARE Court staff
- ▶ Supports clients stepping down from conservatorship
- ▶ Aims to prevent rapid deterioration or re-conservatorship

132 Referrals

40 Did not meet Criteria

37 Petitions Filed by DMH

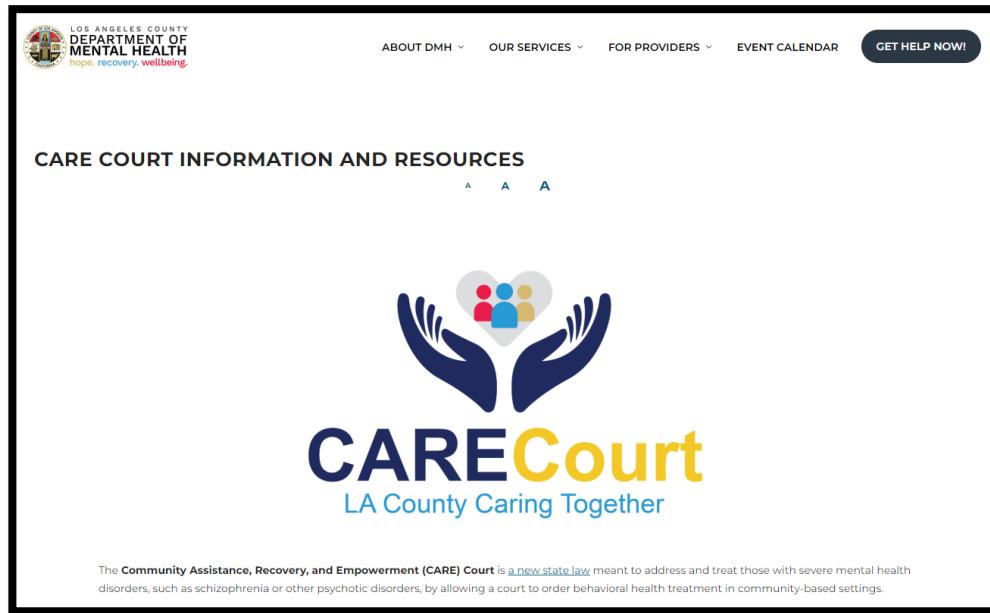
CARE outreaching 33

22 Still Conserved

Moving Forward

- ▶ Currently there is legislation (SB 27) pending on the governor's desk, which would expand the eligibility criteria for CARE Court to include bipolar disorder with psychotic features.
- ▶ This legislation would also give certain referrals from the court petition status without the need for the court to determine *prima facie* (it meets legal criteria).
- ▶ These and other potential changes, such as including felony incompetent to stand trial populations and adding disciplines who can petition, will increase the number of individuals who would qualify in, or be referred, to the CARE Court Program.

CARE Resources and Links



The screenshot shows the official website of the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links to 'ABOUT DMH', 'OUR SERVICES', 'FOR PROVIDERS', 'EVENT CALENDAR', and a 'GET HELP NOW!' button. Below the navigation, there is a section titled 'CARE COURT INFORMATION AND RESOURCES' with three small icons (A, A, A). The main content area features the 'CARE Court' logo, which consists of two blue hands holding a heart with three stylized human figures inside. The text 'CARE Court' is in large blue and yellow letters, with 'LA County Caring Together' in smaller blue text below it. A descriptive paragraph explains the CARE Court program, stating it is a new state law meant to address and treat those with severe mental health disorders. At the bottom of the page, there is a note about the program's implementation and a link to the County's website.

Web: <https://dmh.lacounty.gov/court-programs/care-court/>

Email: CARECourt@dmh.lacounty.gov

By focusing on a holistic, person-centered approach, CARE Court aims to break the cycle of homelessness and incarceration for individuals and promote long-term recovery through a civil court process. This holistic approach seeks to create a safe, supportive, and healthier community for all residents.

CARE Court is intended to be a path towards recovery for a very specific population of adults.

The goal of the program is to divert individuals with schizophrenia or other psychotic disorders from more restrictive settings (such as conservatorships or incarceration) into the community with a supportive Care Agreement or plan to meet their individual needs.

Voluntary treatment is always available and preferred to court involved/ordered treatment.

While the County of Los Angeles is part of the second legislative group/cohort, early implementation will allow us to optimize the resources and services offered across our departments during this state of emergency on homelessness and early CARE implementation.

CARE Court will begin accepting petitions on **December 1, 2023**, but help for community members does NOT have to wait. Residents and family members can access other LACDMH programs, services, and resources today through our website, calling our 24/7 Help Line at (800) 854-7771, or calling/texting the [988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline](#).

Explore the below sections for more information about CARE Court; program details will also be posted on [L.A. Court's website](#) soon. If you have additional questions about CARE Court, email CARECourt@dmh.lacounty.gov.

HOW CARE COURT WORKS

WHO IS INVOLVED IN CARE COURT

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS