



Petitioner's Guide

How to Apply for CARE Court

What is CARE Court?

Community Assistance, Recovery, and Empowerment (CARE) Court helps people with severe, untreated mental health issues, such as schizophrenia, and those who care for them to access services that can help keep them safe. Participants can receive many kinds of support, which may include counseling, medication, housing, social services, and others.

CARE Court is part of an extended menu of programs to provide mental health assistance for those who need it. A CARE plan is NOT a conservatorship. Participants can express their own preferences about treatment and make their own decisions about taking part 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 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/court-programs/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 Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (LACDMH) provides [many additional programs](#) that can help.

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 evaluation is performed to determine whether they are eligible to take part in the CARE program.

STEP THREE

DEVELOPING A CARE PLAN

A team of experts, which can include clinicians, case managers, people with lived experience, and others, meets with the participant in the community to create a personalized treatment plan 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 supports should be extended for up to 12 more months.

STEP FIVE

NEXT STEPS

The participant can continue with treatment, supportive services, and housing in the community to support long-term recovery, even after they are no longer a CARE program participant. Their supportive-decision-making materials can 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 past 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](#)

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

To learn more about CARE and other resources to help people with severe mental illness, visit

dmh.lacounty.gov/court-programs/care-court