How to File a CARE Court Petition in Los Angeles County

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CARE Court (Community Assistance, Recovery and Empowerment) lets a family member ask a judge to order a treatment plan for an adult with untreated schizophrenia or another psychotic disorder. It costs nothing to file, you do not need a lawyer, and a parent, spouse, sibling, child, grandparent or roommate can start it.

Cost	Free to file. No one is turned away for inability to pay.
Forms	CARE-100 (petition) plus CARE-101 (mental health declaration), or proof of two 5250 holds
Where to file	Any of the LA Superior Court locations listed at lacourt.org/care, or online
Hearings	Norwalk Courthouse, Departments B and Z, or remotely
Questions	CARECourt@lacourt.org (court) · CARECourt@dmh.lacounty.gov (DMH)

Who can file a CARE petition?

A family member can: a spouse, parent, sibling, child, grandparent or someone acting in place of a parent, and any adult the person lives with. First responders, including police, firefighters, paramedics, mobile crisis and homeless outreach workers, can also file, as can a treating behavioral health professional, the County behavioral health director, the Public Guardian, or the person themselves.

Who qualifies for CARE Court?

An adult 18 or older who is diagnosed with a disorder in the "schizophrenia and other psychotic disorders" class, or bipolar I disorder with psychotic episodes, and who is currently having symptoms. They must also be not clinically stabilized in ongoing treatment, and either be substantially deteriorating and unlikely to survive safely without supervision, or need services to prevent a relapse.

Addiction alone does not qualify. If your loved one's main problem is drugs or alcohol, look at a 5150 under SB 43 instead.

Which forms do I need?

You need form CARE-100, the petition, plus one of two things: form CARE-101, a mental health declaration signed by a licensed behavioral health provider, or evidence that the person was detained on at least two 5250 holds, with the most recent in the past 60 days.

The forms are available in English, Spanish, Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese. If you do not have a provider declaration, the hold history from hospital records is the other route.

Where do I file in Los Angeles?

You can file at any of the LA Superior Court locations listed on lacourt.org/care, including Stanley Mosk Courthouse at 111 N. Hill St. in downtown Los Angeles, or file online. CARE hearings are held at the Norwalk Courthouse in Departments B and Z, and participants may attend remotely.

How much does it cost?

Nothing to file. The County Department of Mental Health states there are no costs to individuals to file a CARE petition, and no one is turned away because of inability to pay.

What happens after I file?

The court reviews the petition. If the case moves forward, your loved one is offered treatment and services through CARE. Participants receive services for up to one year, the court holds a status hearing at 11 months, and it can renew services for one more year. Questions about your case go to CARECourt@lacourt.org.

Can CARE Court force treatment or medication?

No. Participants cannot be forced to take part or to take medication, and there are no civil or criminal penalties for choosing not to participate. What CARE does is put a judge, a plan and a County team behind your loved one's care, and the record it builds can matter later if the person meets the standard for a hold or conservatorship.

CARE Court or Laura's Law: which is right?

File CARE if the diagnosis is schizophrenia spectrum or bipolar I with psychosis and you want to start the case yourself today. Refer to Laura's Law (AOT-LA) if the person has a severe mental illness and a history of hospitalizations or dangerous episodes. You can do both. NAMI Westside's family navigators can help you choose: **424-293-0645**.

Sources

1. Los Angeles Superior Court: CARE Act
2. LA County DMH: CARE Court
3. Judicial Council of California: form CARE-100
4. City of Santa Monica: Connect with homelessness services (NAMI Westside)

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