LPS Conservatorship in Los Angeles: What Families Can and Can't Do

Updated October 28, 2026. Every phone number was checked against an official page.

An LPS conservatorship is the strongest tool California has for a person so sick they cannot care for themselves or accept treatment. In Los Angeles County a family cannot file one directly: only designated treatment facilities, agencies or the courts can refer a case to the Public Guardian. But families shape whether it happens. Here is how.

What is an LPS conservatorship?

It is a court case under the Lanterman-Petris-Short (LPS) Act in which a judge appoints a conservator for a person who is "gravely disabled," meaning that because of a mental health disorder they cannot care for their basic needs and are unwilling or unable to accept treatment voluntarily. The conservator can make treatment and placement decisions the person cannot make for themselves.

Who can start an LPS conservatorship in LA County?

Only designated mental health treatment facilities, agencies or the courts can make a referral, according to the LA County Department of Mental Health. The Office of the Public Guardian investigates, and only the Public Guardian can serve as the temporary conservator. A parent, spouse or sibling cannot file the case themselves.

How can family help a conservatorship happen?

Referrals come from designated treatment facilities, so the hospital is usually where to start, while your loved one is admitted, often after a 5150 hold. Call the unit, ask for the social worker or treating psychiatrist, and ask directly whether they will refer to the Public Guardian.

Give them a written history: past hospitalizations with dates, what happens within days of each discharge, whether your loved one eats, has shelter or treats injuries when on their own. The treatment team may not know any of it unless you tell them.

What does "gravely disabled" mean after SB 43?

Since January 2026 in Los Angeles County, gravely disabled covers a person who, because of a mental health disorder, a severe substance use disorder, or both, cannot provide for food, clothing, shelter, personal safety or necessary medical care. SB 43 added severe addiction and the last two needs. That widens who can be held and evaluated, which is often the first step toward a conservatorship referral.

How long does an LPS conservatorship last?

One year. An LPS conservatorship ends automatically after one year unless a court renews it at a hearing, and it can be renewed annually.

What is the difference between LPS and probate conservatorship?

LPS is for mental health disorders; probate conservatorship, under the Probate Code, is for people who cannot care for their physical health, food, clothing or shelter, or cannot manage their finances.

	LPS	Probate
Purpose	Mental health treatment for a gravely disabled person	Personal care, finances, or both
Age	All ages may qualify	Adults 18 and older
Length	One year, renewable	Indefinite; either side can petition to end it
Who starts it	Designated facilities, agencies or courts refer	Filed in Probate Court

What should I try first?

Usually the less restrictive paths. You can file a CARE Court petition yourself today, or refer to Laura's Law (AOT-LA) with a phone call. Those build the record and the care team that a conservatorship later depends on. For guidance, call NAMI Westside family navigation at **424-293-0645**, or **424-293-0646** in Spanish.

Sources

1. LA County DMH: Public Guardian FAQs
2. California Courts: Conservatorship
3. LA County DMH: SB 43 frequently asked questions (PDF)
4. City of Santa Monica: Connect with homelessness services (NAMI Westside)

Empower Santa Monica is a volunteer resident movement, not the City of Santa Monica. Nobody is paid, we take no donations and we back no candidate. This page is general information, not legal or medical advice.