How to Get a Loved One Off the Street: Five Lawful Paths for Families

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If someone you love is living on the street and too sick to accept help, you are not out of options. California law gives families and responders five lawful paths. Some you can start yourself. Some only police, clinicians or the County can start, but you can push for them. Here they are side by side, with the phone numbers to begin tonight.

Path					What it is	Who can start it
5150 hold (with SB 43)	Up to 72 hours of involuntary psychiatric evaluation and treatment	Police, or a clinician approved by LA County DMH. Not family.	None to start	No	Call **911** in danger, or the Help Line **(800) 854-7771**	
CARE Court	A court-supervised treatment plan for up to one year, renewable once	Family can file: a spouse, parent, sibling, child, grandparent or someone they live with	Free to file	Cannot be forced to take part or take medication	File form CARE-100 at lacourt.org/care	
Laura's Law (AOT)	Outreach, then court-ordered outpatient	Family can refer: a parent, spouse,	Free to refer	Voluntary first; a court can order	Call AOT-LA **213-738-2440**	

Path					What it is	Who can start it
	treatment if voluntary care is refused	sibling, adult child or adult they live with		outpatient treatment		
LPS conservatorship	A court appoints a conservator for someone gravely disabled. Lasts one year, renewable.	Only designated treatment facilities, agencies or the courts can refer. Not family.	None to family to start	No	Ask the treating hospital to refer to the Public Guardian	
Bring them home (Project Homecoming)	Santa Monica's program that reunites people with family willing to take them in	The person, with family on the other end	Ask the program	Yes	Call **(310) 458-8953**	

What can I legally do if my adult child is homeless and refuses help?

You can file a CARE Court petition yourself, refer them to Laura's Law (AOT-LA) yourself, and call for a 5150 evaluation when they are a danger or gravely disabled. Those are the three doors a family can open directly.

An adult has the right to refuse treatment, which is why so many families are told there is nothing they can do. That is not the whole story. When a person is too sick to understand they are sick, the law has narrow, court-supervised ways to get them care. Each one has a time limit, a lawyer or advocate, and a judge. The person keeps their rights.

Start by writing down what you see: dates, places, what they said, whether they are eating, whether they have been hospitalized and when. Every path below asks for this history, and families who keep it move faster.

Can I put my family member on a 5150 hold?

No. A family member cannot place a 5150 hold. Only a police or peace officer, or a person approved by the LA County Department of Mental Health (an "LPS-authorized" clinician), can start one.

What you can do is call. If your loved one is in danger or dangerous, call **911**. If not, call the LA County Help Line for Mental Health and Substance Use Services at **(800) 854-7771**, which dispatches clinician teams. Tell them plainly what you see: not eating, no shelter, untreated injuries, talking to no one there. Those details are what the person who decides is listening for. Read the full 5150 guide.

Does SB 43 let them be held for drug or alcohol addiction?

Yes, since January 2026 in LA County. SB 43 expanded "gravely disabled" to include a severe substance use disorder, alone or together with a mental health disorder, when it leaves a person unable to provide for food, clothing, shelter, personal safety or necessary medical care.

Before SB 43, a person whose addiction kept them on the street usually did not qualify unless they also had a mental illness. Now the same standard applies to severe addiction. It still takes a police officer or an LPS-authorized clinician to decide in the moment.

How do I file a CARE Court petition in LA County?

You file form CARE-100 with the Los Angeles Superior Court, and it costs nothing. CARE Court is for adults with a disorder in the schizophrenia and other psychotic disorders class, or bipolar I disorder with psychotic episodes, who are not stabilized in treatment. Addiction alone does not qualify.

Along with the petition you attach either form CARE-101, a declaration from a licensed behavioral health provider, or proof the person was held on at least two 5250 holds with the most recent within the past 60 days. Step-by-step CARE Court guide.

What is Laura's Law (AOT), and how do I refer someone?

Laura's Law is California's Assisted Outpatient Treatment program. In LA County it is called AOT-LA, and a parent, spouse, sibling, adult child or adult who lives with the person can refer them by calling **213-738-2440** or emailing the referral form to AOTLAOE@dmh.lacounty.gov.

AOT is for adults with a severe mental illness and a history of not following treatment, such as two or more hospitalizations in the last 36 months or an act, threat or attempt of serious harm in the last 48 months. A team reaches out first. If the person refuses and still meets the criteria, AOT can petition the court to order outpatient treatment. Full Laura's Law guide.

How does conservatorship work, and who can start it?

An LPS conservatorship is a court order that puts a conservator in charge of treatment for a person who is gravely disabled, and only designated treatment facilities, agencies or the courts can make the referral. Families cannot file one directly in LA County.

It usually starts in the hospital. If your loved one is hospitalized, ask the treatment team whether they will refer to the Office of the Public Guardian, and tell them everything you know about what happens after discharge. An LPS conservatorship ends after one year unless a court renews it. Conservatorship guide for families.

What if my loved one wants to come home?

Call Santa Monica's Project Homecoming at **(310) 458-8953**. It has reunited more than 3,200 people with family since 2006. It works when the person wants to go and family on the other end is ready to receive them. How Bring them home works.

Where can families get support?

Call NAMI Westside Los Angeles family navigation at **424-293-0645** in English or **424-293-0646** in Spanish. They help families figure out which path fits and what to say.

The LA County Help Line at **(800) 854-7771** answers 24/7 for mental health and substance use, including detox beds. In a crisis, call or text **988**, or text "LA" to 741741.

And take care of yourself. This is a long road, and the people who walk it with you matter.

Why one City desk for families?

Because almost nobody knows all five paths, and no single office explains them. Our plan, a resident draft, asks Santa Monica for one desk that helps families file the petition, the referral or the report, and a lawful way to learn a loved one is safe. Nothing has been submitted to City Council yet. Read the six-point plan.

Sources

1. LA County DMH: SB 43 frequently asked questions (PDF)
2. Los Angeles Superior Court: CARE Act
3. LA County DMH: CARE Court
4. LA County DMH: Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT-LA)
5. LA County DMH: Public Guardian FAQs
6. City of Santa Monica: Connect with homelessness services
7. City of Santa Monica: 2025 point-in-time count release (Project Homecoming)

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