# Laura's Law in Los Angeles: How Families Refer a Loved One to AOT

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Laura's Law is California's Assisted Outpatient Treatment law. In Los Angeles County the program is AOT-LA, run by the Department of Mental Health, and a family member can make the referral with a phone call. A team reaches out first. If your loved one refuses and still meets the criteria, AOT can ask a court to order outpatient treatment.

**Refer:** call AOT-LA at **213-738-2440**, or email the referral form (PDF) to AOTLAOE@dmh.lacounty.gov. Do not put sensitive details in the body of the email; put them in the form.

## Who can refer someone to AOT-LA?

A parent, spouse, sibling or adult child can refer, and so can any adult 18 or older who lives with the person. A licensed mental health provider who treats them, the director of a treatment or residential care agency, the director of a hospital where they are admitted, a police, parole or probation officer, and a Superior Court judge can also refer.

## Who qualifies for Laura's Law in LA County?

An adult 18 or older with a severe mental illness and a history of not following treatment that includes at least one of these:

- Two or more hospitalizations or forensic mental health episodes in the last 36 months, or
- One or more acts, threats or attempts to cause serious physical harm to themselves or others in the last 48 months.

A clinician must also find that the person is unlikely to survive safely without supervision and is substantially deteriorating, or needs AOT to prevent relapse; that they are not engaging in treatment; that AOT is the least restrictive option; and that they are likely to benefit.

## How do I make a referral?

Call **213-738-2440** or email the AOT-LA referral form to AOTLAOE@dmh.lacounty.gov. Have ready: your loved one's full name and date of birth, the diagnosis if you know it, dates and places of hospitalizations, any incidents of harm or threats with dates, where they can usually be found, and how to reach you.

If they are homeless, describe the blocks they stay on and the times they are usually there. Outreach teams need that to find them.

## Is AOT voluntary or court-ordered?

Both, in that order. AOT-LA first tries to engage the person in voluntary services, such as a Full Service Partnership. If they decline and still meet the criteria, AOT may petition the Mental Health Court, and if the petition is granted, the court orders outpatient treatment.

## Who files the court petition?

The County does, not the family. Your part is the referral and the history. AOT-LA decides whether to petition the court after its outreach.

## What is the difference between AOT and CARE Court?

The biggest difference is who acts. With CARE Court, you file the petition yourself, and it covers schizophrenia spectrum and bipolar I with psychosis. With AOT, you refer and the County petitions, and it covers severe mental illness with a hospitalization or harm history.

| | AOT-LA (Laura's Law) | CARE Court |
|---|---|---|
| Family role | Refers by phone or email | Files the petition |
| Diagnosis | Severe mental illness | Schizophrenia spectrum or bipolar I with psychosis |
| History needed | 2+ hospitalizations in 36 months, or harm in 48 months | Not stabilized in treatment, deteriorating |
| Court role | Can order outpatient treatment | Orders a CARE plan; participation not forced |

Many families do both.

## What if they are too sick for outpatient care?

If your loved one is in danger or cannot provide for food, clothing, shelter, safety or necessary medical care, call for a 5150 evaluation: **911** in danger, or **(800) 854-7771** otherwise. NAMI Westside's family navigators can talk it through: **424-293-0645**.

## Sources


1. LA County DMH: Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT-LA)
2. LA County DMH: AOT-LA referral form (PDF)
3. Los Angeles Superior Court: CARE Act
4. City of Santa Monica: Connect with homelessness services (NAMI Westside)

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