

Assisted Outpatient Treatment
3/2/2021

Background

Assembly Bill 1421 by Assemblywoman Helen Thomson was signed into law in 2002. This law is commonly referred to as Laura's Law, named after Laura Wilcox, a mental health worker who was killed by a man who had refused psychiatric treatment. The law assigned Counties the option of implementing court-ordered Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT).

AB 1421 originally required a County to opt in through a resolution by the Board of Supervisors. Last legislative cycle, AB 1976 went into law changing it from an opt in program. Now, Counties are required to implement AOT or opt out by July 1, 2021.

Court Requirements

AOT is a court ordered outpatient service for adults, ages 18 years and older, who have a serious mental illness and a history of (a) psychiatric hospitalizations, (b) jailings, or (c) acts, threats or attempts of serious violent behavior towards themselves or others. Consumers must first be offered voluntary treatment within the past 10 days.

Family members, roommates, treatment providers, and law enforcement may request an investigation to determine whether the consumer meets criteria. Only the County mental health director or his or her designee may file a petition with the court. The person named in the petition has a right to a defender appointed by the court.

If a judge finds that the individual meets the criteria, the AOT order would be for a 180 day treatment period and not to exceed 180 days. After 180 days, the director of the AOT program can apply for an additional 180 days of treatment. If the consumer is not compliant with treatment, the consumer can be transported to a hospital and held up to 72 hours. After 72 hours, the same hospitalization inpatient criteria would still apply (danger to self, others, or gravely disabled).

The court cannot order involuntary administration of medications.

Program

Counties that have implemented this use the Full Service Partnership (FSP) or Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) models.

Survey

The County of Sacramento is seeking community input on Laura's Law/Assisted Outpatient Treatment through this survey: <https://forms.gle/bnDdLXRTXzJHF1We7>
We are accepting responses on the survey through Monday, March 22, 2021.