



Administrative Office of the Courts

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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New court initiative helps families seek mental health treatment for loved ones

SANTA FE – Family members can obtain no-cost assistance to determine whether a loved one with mental illness is an appropriate candidate for community-based treatment under judicial supervision, the Administrative Office of the Courts announced today.

The service is available to a parent, spouse and certain others seeking help for a qualifying loved one who lives in one of seven counties with a court-operated Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT) program — Santa Fe, Los Alamos, Rio Arriba counties in the First Judicial District; San Miguel, Mora, and Guadalupe in the Fourth Judicial District; and San Juan County in the Eleventh Judicial District.

“This free service will make assisted outpatient treatment more accessible to people struggling to find help for loved ones with a history of mental illness and hospitalizations,” said AOC Director Karl Reifsteck.

HOW IT WORKS

- Court staff will connect interested family members with a qualified mental health professional who can assess whether an individual is eligible for AOT. The mental health professional also can prepare part of the documentation needed to petition a district court for an order that requires the individual to participate in outpatient treatment.
- The service is available to people without an attorney who meet the requirements in state law for filing an AOT petition: a parent, spouse, child or sibling 18 years or older of an individual with a severe mental disorder, as well as any adult who resides with that individual.
- The individual who could be subject to the court-ordered treatment must reside in, or is reasonably believed to live in, the First or Fourth Judicial Districts or San Juan County in the Eleventh District. The family member or other qualifying person requesting the new court service can live elsewhere.

The AOC developed the service in partnership with the University of New Mexico’s Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, which will provide mental health care professionals such as a physician or licensed psychologist who can assess whether an individual qualifies for

assisted outpatient treatment. Funding for the initiative comes from an appropriation by the Legislature to expand behavioral health services in the state.

“People without an attorney face difficulties navigating the legal process to request assisted outpatient treatment for a loved one. This service can help individuals overcome one of those hurdles,” said Stacey Boone, senior statewide behavioral health manager at the AOC.

After a petition is filed, a district court makes the final decision on whether to order assisted outpatient treatment. There is no guarantee for family members who use the new referral service that a court will require their loved one to participate in behavioral health treatment.

Under state law, adults may be eligible for assisted outpatient treatment if they:

- Are diagnosed with a serious mental disorder.
- Have a history of not complying with treatment voluntarily, resulting in self-harm, violent behavior or threats to others as well as repeated instances of hospitalization or incarceration.
- Would benefit from AOT to prevent a relapse or further deterioration of their condition.

People interested in the referral service should contact:

The First Judicial District Court at 505-490-5518 if their loved one lives in Santa Fe, Los Alamos or Rio Arriba counties.

The Fourth Judicial District at 505-637-2729 if they are seeking treatment for a loved one in San Miguel, Mora or Guadalupe counties.

The Eleventh Judicial District at 505-419-1804 if their loved one is in San Juan County.

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