



CONTRA COSTA  
**HEALTH**

## **CARE ACT COURT**

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

#### **What is CARE Act Court?**

The Community Assistance Recovery and Empowerment Act (CARE) Court is a new civil court process that provides support services to people with certain untreated schizophrenia spectrum or other psychotic disorders who meet specific criteria in order to prevent institutionalization and ensure appropriate care.

#### **Does Entering CARE Act Court Create a Criminal Record for a Person?**

No. CARE Act Court is a civil proceeding to help those who qualify get the services they need.

#### **Who Can Qualify for CARE Act Court?**

An individual at least 18 years old who is diagnosed with certain schizophrenia spectrum or other psychotic disorders who is also currently experiencing severe mental illness that interferes with their ability to participate safely in daily life. The participant cannot be currently stabilized in an on-going voluntary treatment program.

#### **Who Can Petition An Individual to CARE Act Court?**

Family members, health care providers, county behavioral health workers, first responders, social services providers and others, as specified in the CARE Act, may petition for a person to be considered for the CARE Act Court. A person may also petition themselves for CARE Act Court.

#### **What Happens After an Individual is Petitioned to CARE Act Court?**

A Contra Costa County Superior Court Judge will review the petition that is filed for the individual to determine if they meet the criteria for CARE. The judge will then either dismiss the petition, order a report from a county behavioral health agency, or set an initial court appearance. If the individual is found to be eligible, the court will work with the county behavioral health agency, the individual, the individual's attorney, and a volunteer supporter (if applicable) to connect the individual with services. This connection will happen either through voluntary engagement, a CARE agreement, or a CARE plan.



### **Is An Attorney Needed?**

No. The Contra Costa County Public Defender will represent all individuals being petitioned for inclusion in CARE Act Court. Individuals filing petitions do not need an attorney.

### **How Do I Refer Someone to CARE Act Court?**

Email: [care\\_act\\_inquiries@contracosta.courts.ca.gov](mailto:care_act_inquiries@contracosta.courts.ca.gov)

Phone: (925) 608-2066

### **Are there any costs for filing my CARE Act Court petition or through the entire process?**

No. Filing a CARE Act Court petition is free. Services provided also have no cost to the participant.

### **Is CARE Act Court a conservatorship?**

No, CARE Act Court is not a conservatorship. CARE Act Court's goal is for every participating person to graduate and live a full and autonomous life. CARE Act Court enables the participant to work with behavioral health specialists, housing specialists, their petitioners, and the judicial officer to develop a CARE Act Plan to improve their long-term health, so that they can live successfully and independently.

### **Can individuals participating in CARE Act Court make their own decisions?**

Yes. CARE Act Court empowers individuals to make self-directed decisions about their own treatment and recovery. Participants work collaboratively with Contra Costa Health – Behavioral Health Services and others to create a personalized CARE Agreement or CARE Plan that fits their unique needs and circumstances. The emphasis is on supporting people in making informed decisions and building a recovery-oriented life.

### **Can CARE Court require a participant to take and stay on their medication?**

No. The Court may order stabilizing medication for acute conditions in the CARE Plan, however, they cannot order the participant/respondent to take that medication against their will.

### **What will happen if someone isn't successful in CARE Act Court?**

If someone does not complete their CARE Agreement or Plan, they may lose access to the specialized support and prioritization CARE Act Court offers. Each situation is unique, and the exact implications vary based on the participant's circumstances and the reasons for discontinuation. The Court

## FAQs Continued

will encourage the participant to continue engaging with available mental health resources and consider discussing the best alternative care options with a mental health professional.

### **What if someone is not eligible for CARE Act Court?**

It is important for someone to get help if they need it. Contra Costa Health – Behavioral Health Services offers a wide range of services and support to individuals of all ages with mental health and substance use challenges. If an individual is not eligible for CARE Act Court, they may be referred to the Behavioral Health ACCESS line at 1-888-678-7277. This is the system-wide point of contact for information, screening and referrals for mental health and substance use services and treatment for Contra Costa County residents.

### **How can I get more information on CARE Court?**

Petitioners without an attorney who need additional information or assistance with filing a petition may contact the Court's Self-Help Center at [care\\_act\\_inquiries@contracosta.courts.ca.gov](mailto:care_act_inquiries@contracosta.courts.ca.gov) or (925) 608-2066.