

OUR HISTORY

In 2008, the Louisiana legislature enacted R.S. 28:66 et seq. relative to assistive outpatient treatment (“AOT”) for behavioral health services.

Otherwise known as “Nicola’s Law”, it was a response to the tragic death of a New Orleans police officer at the hands of a mentally-ill person who had been released from psychiatric hospitalization without any provision for outpatient services. The law is devised to provide a mechanism to order outpatient services for adults who are not presently dangerous or gravely disabled but who have a history of psychiatric hospitalizations and non-compliance with treatment.

The 22nd JDC was awarded a federal grant from Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration (SAMHSA) for the implementation of an AOT program beginning December 2020. The goal of this Court is to improve the stability and well-being of this population through increased treatment participation and a reduction of hospitalization, homelessness, and criminal conduct.

HOW TO REFER

Often referrals will be initiated by professionals, such as a psychiatrist or psychologist. Referrals may come from hospitals with an inpatient psychiatric unit, outpatient behavioral health providers, and family members.

To refer an individual to AOT please call:
(985) 809-5394

WHAT IS ASSISTIVE OUTPATIENT TREATMENT OR AOT?

"Assisted outpatient treatment" is defined as categories of community services ordered by a district court, including case management services, care coordination or assertive community treatment team services, prescribed to treat a person’s mental disorder and to support them in living in the community, or to attempt to prevent a relapse or deterioration that may reasonably be predicted to result in harm to the person or another or the need for hospitalization.

Assisted outpatient treatment may include:

- medication;
- individual therapy;
- day or partial-day programming activities;
- educational and vocational training or activities;
- alcohol and substance abuse treatment
- peer support
- frequent check-ins and staffing with your treatment team
- transportation and
- any other services prescribed to treat the patient's mental disorder and to assist the patient in living and functioning in the community, or to attempt to prevent a deterioration of the patient's mental or physical condition;



What are the individual's rights in the process?

AOT strictly defines eligibility criteria in an effort to ensure appropriate application of the law and to protect individual rights. The law specifically defines the rights of the individual who is subject to AOT, including participation in the development of a treatment plan, adequate notice of hearings, to receive a copy of the court-ordered evaluation, the appointment of an attorney, to be present at the hearing, to present evidence and call and/or cross-examine witnesses, and to appeal decisions

How long is a person committed to AOT?

A civil court can grant an AOT order for a period of time not to exceed one (1) year. Prior to the order expiring, the AOT Team may, after reevaluation of the participant, petition the court for extension of services. The order for AOT may be extended for a period of time not to exceed one (1) year.

What happens if a person does not comply?

Court cannot make a finding of contempt, nor can the court force an individual to take medications. If an individual participating in AOT is not complying with aspects of their treatment plan, the AOT Team will make every attempt to positively re-engage that person. If an individual is unable to positively re-engage in the AOT program and is at risk of harm to self or others, the AOT Team may request a court order for involuntary transportation for an evaluation, including inpatient hospitalization.