

## **Community Assistance, Recovery and Empowerment Act (CARE)**

- As the Mental Health Plan for Kern, KernBHRS was mandated to develop and implement the CARE Act Program. KernBHRS, through the Request For Proposal process, contracted this service to Telecare. The Kern CARE Court Program started October 1, 2024.
- The goal of the CARE Act Program is to provide services upstream, before clients are hospitalized, incarcerated, or placed on an LPS Conservatorship.
- CARE creates a new pathway to deliver mental health and substance use disorder treatment and supportive services.

### **Eligible individuals for CARE are:**

- 1.) 18 years and older with a diagnosis of bipolar I disorder with psychotic features, schizophrenia spectrum and other psychotic disorders.
- 2.) The person has symptoms that are severe in degree and persistent in duration, which may cause behavioral functioning which interferes substantially with the primary activities of daily living (i.e. basic activities related to personal care), and which may result in an inability to maintain stable adjustment and independent functioning without treatment, support, and rehabilitation for a long or indefinite period of time.
- 3.) The person is not clinically stabilized with ongoing voluntary outpatient treatment.
- 4.) Either the person is unlikely to survive safely/independently in the community and the condition is deteriorating or services and support are needed to prevent relapse of deterioration that would result in grave disability or serious harm to the person or others.
- 5.) Participation in CARE Act is the least restrictive alternative
- 6.) The person will likely benefit from participating in a CARE plan or CARE agreement.
- 7.) Persons unlikely to benefit from Assisted Outpatient Treatment or Mental Health Diversion.
- 8.) Persons who are found incompetent to stand trial for misdemeanors and felonies can be evaluated for CARE through the petition process through the courts.

- For further eligibility information please visit <https://courts.ca.gov/system/files/2025-12/CARE%20Act%20Eligibility%20Criteria%2012.05.25.pdf>
- The client is not court ordered to treatment – the county is ordered to provide evaluation and treatment.
- The 3 elements of the CARE Act Program are:
  - Behavioral Health Treatment: Evaluation, Stabilization, and Linkage
  - Housing
  - Community Resources/Services: To encourage autonomy & success when exiting the CARE Program
- The program's duration is 12 months, however, a judge can extended participation for an additional 12 months. After the individual graduates/exits the CARE program, they will be linked to ongoing outpatient treatment.

**Two ways to connect individuals to CARE:**

**Referral Form Process:**

- Referral is located at <https://www.kernbhhs.org>.
  - Follow the Community Resources option at the top of the page and choose CARE Act.
- Referral can be sent to: [CARECourt@kernbhhs.org](mailto:CARECourt@kernbhhs.org) email
- Telecare provides outreach and engagement while evaluating the potential client/respondent for CARE Court eligibility.
- If it is determined the client meets eligibility criteria, Telecare works with County Counsel to complete and submit a petition to the court. If the judge determines at prima face that the respondent meets criteria, they are provided a public defender and work as a team to enter into a CARE Agreement.
- If the respondent is not considered to meet eligibility criteria, Telecare refers/links them to community resources/services.

**Petition Process:**

- Bypassing the referral process and entering a petition directly at the court is also an option.
- The Kern County Superior Court has a page dedicated to CARE Court
  - <https://www.kern.courts.ca.gov/self-help/care>

- Completed CARE Act Petitions and supporting documentation can be filed at the Courthouse. The window where you should file a paper copy is at the LPS CARE window on the first floor of the Metropolitan Justice Building (1215 Truxtun Avenue)
- Completed CARE Act Petitions and supporting documentation can be filed by mail using this address:  
Kern County Superior Court - [Metropolitan Justice Building](#)  
ATTN: CARE Act Clerk - 1st Floor  
1215 Truxtun Ave.  
Bakersfield, CA 93301

**For more information:**

- KernBHRS public website (<https://www.kernbhirs.org>)
  - Community Resources: CARE Act  
(<https://www.kernbhirs.org/services/adult-services/care-act-copy>)
  - Family Education Resource Center  
(<https://www.kernbhirs.org/community-resources/family-education-resource-center-ferc>)
- Email [CARECourt@kernbhirs.org](mailto:CARECourt@kernbhirs.org) for additional questions or to submit a referral form
- Telecare CARE Act Program: (661) 558-1145