

# Doña Ana Assisted Outpatient Treatment



## Overview

Assisted outpatient treatment (AOT) is court ordered, supervised community-based treatment, also known as “outpatient commitment”. The AOT Act, §43-1B-1 through 43-1B-14 NMSA 1978, allows district court judges to order a person with serious mental illness to AOT, committing the local mental health system to serve participant as well as the participant to adhere to their treatment plan. Treatment plans require case management or Assertive Community Treatment (ACT), and include various direct services deemed necessary to allow the individual to live safely in the community. Participants receive due process protections and orders are made only after a hearing in front of a judge. Candidates for ACT must meet specific criteria, including prior history of hospitalizations or arrest, and history of non-engagement in treatment.

## Partners

- **U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration** provides four-years of funding for the program implementation and evaluation.
- **Doña Ana Health and Human Services Department** oversees the implementation of the program, and employs the program administrator.
- **3<sup>rd</sup> Judicial District Court** conducts the initial and status hearings. The judge’s primary role is to encourage and motivate the participant.
- **3<sup>rd</sup> Judicial District Attorney’s Office** completes the petitions and participates in court hearing.
- **Respondents Attorney** represents the respondent during all court proceedings
- **Memorial Medical Center** initiates the referrals and submits the affidavit. MMC staff led the development of the treatment plans.
- **La Clinica de Familia** provides treatment including ACT, case management, and other needed services, such as peer support services.
- **Community of Hope** provides a housing navigator and resources for temporary and permanent supportive housing.
- **NAMI of Southern New Mexico** provides social support and peer services by offering peer-to-peer and family-to-family programs.
- **NMSU’s Crimson Research** conducts the evaluation and is responsible for collect data including interviewing AOT participants and measuring progress against goals.

## Sustainability

In order to maintain the program and expand to other communities, the state law needs to be permanent. Without legislative action, it automatically repeals on July 1, 2021. Based on current data, we expect that the program will demonstrate a better return on investment, and in some cases cost-savings, in the criminal justice and healthcare systems. For example, [a 2013 comprehensive cost analysis](#) found that in New York City, overall service costs for tracked patients declined 43% in the first year after AOT initiation, and an additional 13% in the second year. The declines were attributed mainly to reduced need for hospitalizations. There is also good reason to expect the use of AOT will yield savings for the criminal justice and correctional systems through reduced emergency calls, arrests, prosecutions and incarcerations. For the courts, the additional burden of conducting AOT hearings is likely to be offset by a reduction in the need to conduct *inpatient* commitment hearings for the same individuals.

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