



The mission of Mental Health America of California is to ensure that people of all ages, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, language, race, ethnicity, national origin, immigration status, spirituality, religion socioeconomic status or age, who require mental health services and supports are able to live full and productive lives, receive the mental health services and other services that they need, and are not denied any other benefits, services, rights, or opportunities based on their need for mental health services.

Mental Health America of California (MHAC) appreciates Governor Newsom's dedication to improving the lives of people living with mental health challenges but we urge the Governor to ensure that all programs aimed at increasing access to mental health services are not only voluntary, but also treat individuals living with mental health challenges with compassion and dignity.

Governor Newsom's new [CARE Court](#) proposal would create a new avenue for individuals living with serious mental health or behavioral health challenges to be referred for court-mandated treatment and services. Research demonstrates, however, that very few people who are offered voluntary housing or services will decline the offer, and for those people California has the Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT) program which enables counties to provide services for individuals with serious mental illnesses when a court determines that a person is unlikely to survive safely in the community without supervision.

MHAC agrees that California must improve access to services for our residents, both housed and unhoused, who live with behavioral health challenges. Because involuntary services are traumatizing to the individual, and do not take into consideration a person's autonomy or self-determination, we believe that the best way to get more people into treatment and services, is to ensure that there are adequate voluntary, community-based culturally competent mental health services and permanent, safe, affordable supportive housing programs so that every person in California has access to appropriate mental health services at the time those services are needed. If accessible and appropriate services are available, and if individuals have information about how to access those services, people will voluntarily seek housing, services and treatment.

We look forward to working collaboratively with the Administration as this proposal is developed. We agree with the Governor's goal of providing services to unhoused people with behavioral health challenges, and we believe strongly that this goal can be reached with a program that is both compassionate and voluntary.