



Inpatient treatment

Many individuals living with serious mental illness (SMI) do not adhere to outpatient treatment, increasing their risk for suicide and self-harm, violent behavior, [substance misuse](#), [insecure housing](#), high utilization of ERs, and frequent contact with law enforcement. These behaviors lead to high rates of inpatient psychiatric [hospitalization](#) and potential [incarceration](#).

Why does AOT matter to inpatient psychiatric facilities?

AOT is designed to address the issue of lack of adherence among individuals living with SMI, particularly those that cannot recognize that they are ill. Under the current mental health code, individuals are eligible for AOT if their lack of recognition that they need treatment results in non-compliance and the likelihood that their condition will worsen, increasing the risk of harm (physical or mental) to themselves or others.

Lack of adherence can lead to decreased capacity to manage illness, worsening of symptoms, failure to connect to outpatient treatment, and thus frequent utilization of inpatient psychiatric care. Individuals can become dependent on costly care for their SMI needs, particularly those on Medicare who do not have contact with their community mental health until they have exhausted their benefits. Thus, inpatient psychiatric facilities are often the only mental health contacts many individuals have and the best opportunity for AOT to be initiated.

Research has found that individuals with an AOT order have less frequent hospital visits, reduced suicidal and violent behavior, and reduced substance misuse. Accordingly, using AOT as a tool to intervene with the individuals seen most frequently offers potential benefits to the inpatient facility and staff, including reduced readmission rates, increased patient safety, and improved employee retention.

[Assisted outpatient treatment \(AOT\)](#) is a legal mechanism for providing outpatient treatment to individuals living with SMI whose non-compliance places them at risk for negative outcomes. AOT [orders](#) work by compelling the recipient to receive specific treatment that will prevent their condition from worsening and by committing the mental health system to provide treatment.

Action steps for inpatient psychiatric facilities:

- Educate staff on AOT, including [identifying patients eligible for AOT](#).
- Develop internal process for screening clients to identify who could benefit from AOT.
- Work with the community mental health authority(s) to coordinate AOT implementation.
- Identify community providers (such as CCBHCs and CRSPs) who offer common AOT services and establish liaison role.
- Work with county Probate Court(s) to create a system to easily file petitions.
- Identify a contact person within the community mental health authority(s) to assist in the AOT process.

Click here to learn more about how AOT works and how to file an order

