



# AOT paralegals

## The value of AOT paralegals in the prosecutor's office

**An Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT) paralegal is a position in the prosecutor's office that helps to facilitate the processing of AOT petitions and hearings.**

This position receives all AOT paperwork and information and provides it to a prosecuting attorney before a scheduled AOT hearing.

An AOT paralegal provides the CMH and hospitals with one direct person to communicate with. This person can provide pertinent information to the assigned prosecuting attorney for the hearings or trials to support the effective representation of the petitioner and more clinically appropriate AOT orders.

One additional benefit of having one paralegal is that the names of the individuals petitioned will become familiar. If ever a person has a criminal case brought to the prosecutor's office, this AOT paralegal can recognize the mental health needs of the person and ensure the prosecuting attorney knows of those needs. This creates the potential for quicker diversion tactics, as the individual's mental illness is already identified and documented in a court record.

This position would not necessarily need to be a full-time position. It would depend on the county's needs and volume of petitions to process. It could be a paralegal who is already working in the prosecutor's office, who is solely responsible for these tasks and dedicates a portion of their time to AOTs.



**An AOT paralegal helps facilitate the processing of AOT petitions and hearings.**

### **Coordinating across agencies with a memorandum of understanding**

In order to most effectively execute this position in coordination with a CMH, it is crucial to have a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in place. The MOU delineates responsibilities of the AOT paralegal and CMH to best outline a successful way in which the two agencies will work together with AOT information. An MOU that describes the **purpose, specifies personnel and their duties, and lists the parties' agreements** ensures that the expectations of each agency have been discussed and agreed upon for mutual understanding.