



ASSISTED
OUTPATIENT
TREATMENT
NOW!

S.2973: CONTINUUM OF CARE FOR SEVERE MENTAL ILLNESS

Continuum of Care for severe mental illness (*commonly known as Assisted Outpatient Treatment or AOT*) is **the practice of civil court ordered and supervised community-based, person-centered mental health treatment that is a less restrictive alternative to a civil commitment for inpatient treatment.** The program is designed to provide life-saving intervention for those suffering from severe mental illness (*SMI*), who **struggle with voluntary treatment adherence**, to engage fully with their treatment plan, as well as to better coordinate with treatment providers.

Sponsored by State Senator Cindy Friedman, **S.2973 seeks to stop the revolving door** of repeat hospitalizations, incarceration, and the criminalization of severe mental illness by creating a process for civil court ordered and supervised community-based outpatient treatment. **The proposal is now before Senate Ways and Means.**

Massachusetts is **one of just two states without a process for court ordered and supervised community-based outpatient treatment**, denying access to a critical and proven treat tool.

Untreated severe mental illness destroys lives. This is particularly true for those individuals suffering from an SMI who are often trapped in an endless cycle of forced hospitalization, incarceration, and homelessness. While these individuals often receive needed care while committed to an inpatient facility or while incarcerated, there is little to no follow through once the individual returns to the community.

AOT programs have proven to be effective at providing continuity of care, thus helping to end the revolving door of forced inpatient commitment and the criminalization of mental illness.

The proposal creates a strict eligibility criterion for Critical Community Health Services including: An adult with a primary diagnosis of severe mental illness; is gravely disabled because of the SMI; has a history of lack of treatment adherence; has been involuntarily hospitalized or incarcerated at least twice within the past 36-months; and would likely benefit from Critical Community Health Services.

Please do not hesitate to contact AOTNOW directly for further information. Our advisor, **Shawn Duhamel**, a Senior Advisor with **Shawmut Strategies Group**, can be reached at 617-899-2503 or by email at sduhamel@shawmutsg.com.