

Assisted Outpatient Treatment

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What Is Policy Research's AOT Experience?

Policy Research is a national leader in AOT design, implementation, and evaluation. Policy Research:

- Conducted the first U.S. evaluation of outpatient commitment
- Led national projects under the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's AOT Grant Program
- Delivers customized technical assistance to states and localities building or enhancing AOT programs

Policy Research is a trusted partner for developing, improving, and evaluating effective AOT programs that strengthen communities and save lives.

Learn more at prainc.com



What Is Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT)?

AOT is court-ordered mental health treatment. It is a civil legal mechanism **that connects adults with serious mental illness to community-based mental health services**. AOT—also known as preventive outpatient commitment—aims to improve stability, reduce hospitalizations, and enhance public safety. People with AOT orders may receive services such as case management, medication support, therapy, substance use treatment, and job training.

Why Does AOT Matter?

AOT provides an **evidence-based alternative to repeated hospitalization or incarceration**. Research shows AOT can:

- Reduce hospitalizations and arrests
- Increase engagement in outpatient care
- Improve long-term recovery and stability
- Lower system and treatment costs

By ensuring consistent engagement in mental health services, AOT helps people remain safely in their communities while promoting public safety.

How Does AOT Work?

A judge or magistrate authorizes a community treatment plan that is coordinated with a care team.

There are two approaches to AOT:

- **Step up:** For people in the community who need support engaging in treatment before a crisis occurs.
- **Step down:** For people leaving hospital care who need continued community-based treatment.

Is AOT Implemented the Same Everywhere?

No. **AOT programs vary by state and jurisdiction**. Some courts actively monitor participants through progress reports and hearings; others rely on local service providers for monitoring. Program success depends on adequate funding, quality services, and collaboration among courts, providers, and community supports.