

CONTRA COSTA  
**HEALTH**



[cchealth.org](http://cchealth.org)

# Community Assistance, Recovery & Empowerment (CARE) Act

Elyse Perata, LMFT  
Marie Scannell, PhD

May 6, 2026

## Purpose of CARE

- ❖ To deliver co-occurring behavioral health and substance use services to the most severely ill and vulnerable individuals, while preserving self-determination to the greatest extent possible
- ❖ To help prevent recidivism and more restrictive levels of care or placement, such as conservatorship
- ❖ To meet individuals where they are physically and mentally, bring individualized services to them, and empower them to have an active role and voice in their treatment and goals

Source: California Health & Human Services Agency



- ❖ Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC) 5970-5987 (initially proposed under Senate Bill 1338, Senator Umberg)
- ❖ Contra Costa County Go-Live: December 1, 2024
- ❖ Civil Court Process, Voluntary

## Involved entities include:

- Contra Costa Superior Court
- County Counsel
- Office of the Public Defender
- Behavioral Health Services (BHS)
- Enhanced Care Management
- Behavioral Health Bridge Housing
- Alcohol and Other Drug Services

## Primary functions of Behavioral Health:

- Assessment, eligibility determination, and outreach and engagement
- Providing long-term behavioral health services and linkage to resources
- Coordinating amongst the System of Care for services deemed necessary by the Court
- Providing written updates to the Court
- Data Collection

## ❖ A petitioner could include:

- Family members: limited to a parent, spouse, sibling, child or grandparent
- A mental health professional or other service provider who is treating or has recently treated the client/respondent
- The director of a hospital in which the client/respondent was recently or is hospitalized
- The directors of public service agencies, such Behavioral Health (BH), Adult Protective Services (APS), Public Guardian or Public Conservator (PG/PC)
- A first responder who has had repeated contact with the respondent
- Homeless outreach worker
- A roommate/housemate
- The client/respondent



## ❖ Must meet all criteria:

- 18 years or older
- Currently experiencing a “serious mental disorder” as defined in WIC 5600.3(b)(2) and has a diagnosis in the disorder class: Schizophrenia Spectrum or Other Psychotic Disorders & Bipolar I with psychotic features, as defined in the most recent Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)
- Not clinically stabilized in ongoing voluntary treatment
- At least one of the following is true:
  - The person is unlikely to survive safely in the community without supervision and their condition is substantially deteriorating
  - The person is in need of services and supports to prevent relapse or deterioration that is likely to result in harm to self and/or others or grave disability, as defined in WIC 5150
- CARE is the least restrictive placement necessary to ensure recovery and stability
- The person is likely to benefit from participation in a CARE Agreement or Plan

- ❖ Senate Bill 27 (SB 27) amends provisions of the CARE Act in a number of ways:
  - Adds Bipolar I Disorder with psychotic features as an eligible diagnosis
  - Defines “clinically stabilized in ongoing voluntary treatment”: stable condition and active participation
  - Provides a process by which certain court referrals can constitute a CARE petition without a separate petition form being filed
  - Allows criminal courts to consider CARE referrals earlier for individuals found incompetent to stand trial (IST) in misdemeanor cases
  - Allows nurse practitioners and physician assistants to complete an affidavit in support of a CARE petition
  - Makes other technical amendments to the CARE process

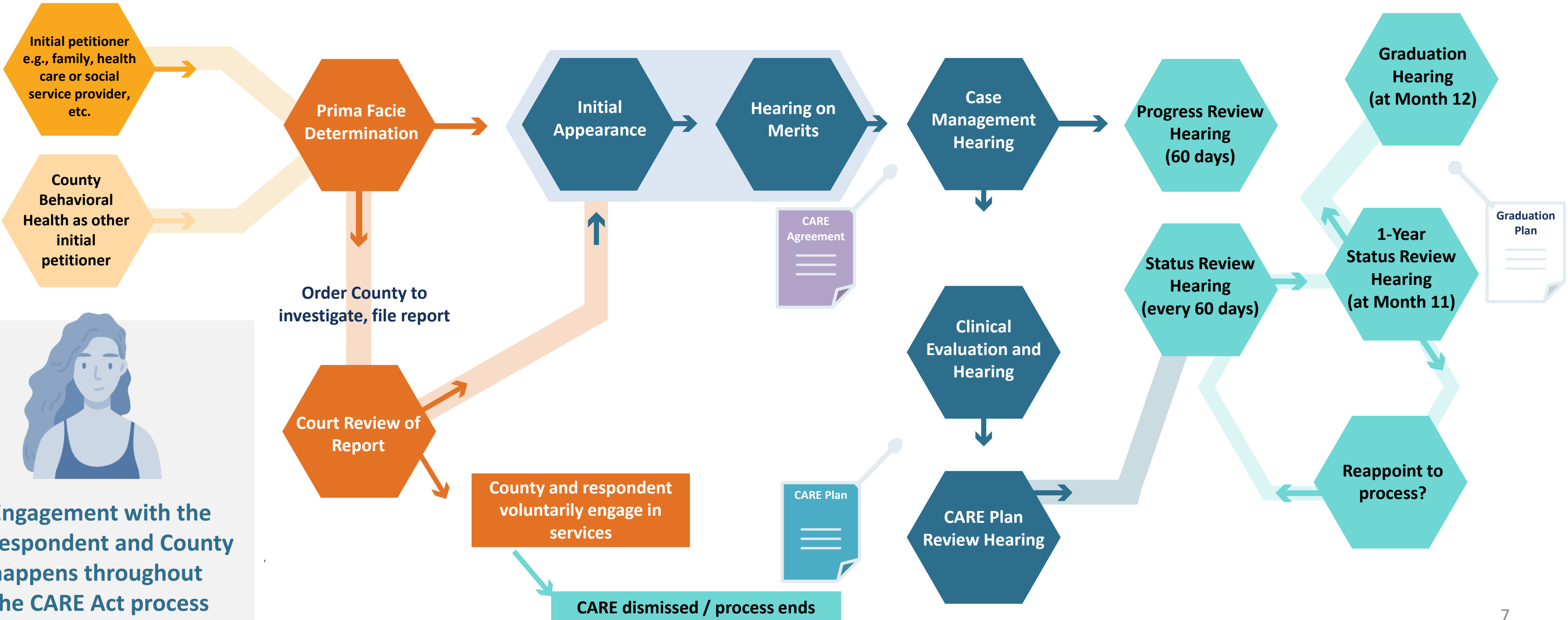
# The Court Process

## CARE Process Initiation

## Engagement

## Court Process/Service Connection

## Service Delivery/Assess Next Steps: Treatment Housing and Support



# Behavioral Health Services Data

## December 2024 to February 2026

### ❖ Petitions

| Petitioner Category                   | Number of Petitions Filed |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Family Member                         | 39                        |
| Hospitals                             | 34                        |
| Public Guardian                       | 22                        |
| Department 10 (SB 27, Year 2026 only) | 12                        |
| Self                                  | 7                         |
| BHS Provider                          | 4                         |
| Department 20 (SB 27, Year 2026 only) | 2                         |
| Licensed Provider                     | 1                         |
| Total                                 | 121                       |

### ❖ Dismissals

| Dismissal Categories          | Number of Dismissals |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| Unable to locate              | 16                   |
| Did not meet criteria         | 16                   |
| Higher level of care          | 7                    |
| Did not meet prima facie      | 2                    |
| Declined to participate       | 2                    |
| Engaged in voluntary services | 2                    |
| Total                         | 49                   |

### ❖ Total IST Referrals

| Referral Category     | Number of Referrals |
|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Unable to locate      | 25                  |
| Active                | 8                   |
| Did not meet criteria | 6                   |
| Petitioned by BHS     | 3                   |
| Higher level of care  | 1                   |
| Total                 | 43                  |

### ❖ Total CARE Agreements: 19

- In process: 4

### ❖ Total CARE Plans: 0

### ❖ Individuals housed via Behavioral Health Bridge Housing: 18

### ❖ First graduation anticipated in April 2026

### ❖ Court Data: December 2024 to January 2026

| Hearing Category    | Number of Hearings |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| Initial Appearances | 167                |
| All other hearings  | 140                |
| Total               | 307                |

- ❖ Contra Costa Superior Court Self-Help Center: [contracosta.courts.ca.gov/self-help](https://contracosta.courts.ca.gov/self-help)
- ❖ Contra Costa CARE Website: [cchealth.org/services-and-programs/behavioral-health/care-act](https://cchealth.org/services-and-programs/behavioral-health/care-act)
- ❖ CalHHS CARE Website: [chhs.ca.gov/care-act/](https://chhs.ca.gov/care-act/)
- ❖ DHCS CARE Website: [dhcs.ca.gov/Pages/CARE-ACT.aspx](https://dhcs.ca.gov/Pages/CARE-ACT.aspx)

CONTRA COSTA  
**HEALTH**



[cchealth.org](http://cchealth.org)

**Thank you!**