

Voluntary services are not a substitute for Laura's Law

Laura's Law is by definition, only for those who fail on voluntary services

A. 5346(a)(4) limits LL to those for whom voluntary services already failed without a court order.¹ Therefore, it makes no sense to argue they would succeed without a court order.

B. 5346(a)(5) requires, after a petition is filed, that the person is again given the option of accepting the services voluntarily. Only those who won't accept voluntary treatment, go on to get a court order. Therefore, it makes no sense to say they would succeed without a court order.²

It is the LL court process that coerces people who refuse voluntary treatment to accept it

Even those who accept the treatment without the order do so **because they were brought in front of a court** and coerced to accept the "voluntary" treatment. Without the existence of LL, they cannot be brought in front of the court to be asked to accept the services voluntarily. Put another way, the "success" of the program is not how many people are put in court-ordered treatment, it is in how many people brought in front of a judge, agree to accept treatment without a court order (plus the number put under court order). In every county and state that has LL, numerous people, who previously failed to accept voluntary services, agreed to accept them only **AFTER they were brought in front of a judge**. If LL did not exist, those people would never have been brought in front of a judge. They would be failures.

Research shows court orders add value

- Cost declines associated with assisted outpatient treatment were about twice as large as those seen for voluntary services.³
- "The increased services available under AOT clearly improve recipient outcomes, however, the AOT court order, itself, and its monitoring do appear to offer additional benefits in improving outcomes."⁴
- "71% [of AOT patients] . . . voluntarily maintained treatment contacts six months after their orders expired" compared with "almost no patients" who were not court-ordered to outpatient treatment.⁵
- In NY, "The odds of arrest for participants currently receiving AOT were nearly two-thirds lower (OR=.39, p<.01) than for individuals who had not yet initiated AOT or signed a voluntary service agreement."⁶

¹ Laura's Law is only available to those who when "(5346(a)(4) The person has a history of lack of compliance with treatment for his or her mental illness..."

² Laura's Law is only offered after (5346(a)(5) "The person has been offered an opportunity to participate in a treatment plan by the director of the local mental health department, or his or her designee, provided the treatment plan includes all of the services described in Section 5348, and the person continues to fail to engage in treatment.

³ Jeffrey Swanson, Richard Van Dorn, Marvin Swartz, Pamela Clark Robbins, Henry Steadman, Thomas McGuire, John Monahan. "The cost of assisted outpatient treatment: can it save states money?" *American Journal of Psychiatry* 170 (2013): 1423–1432.

⁴ Richard Van Dorn, Pamela Clark Robbins, Henry Steadman, Lorna Moser, Allison Gilbert, John Monahan. "Assessing outcomes for consumers in New York's assisted outpatient treatment program." *Psychiatric Services* 61, no. 10 (2010): 976–981.

⁵ Robert Van Putten, Jose Santiago, Michael Berren. "Involuntary outpatient commitment in Arizona: a retrospective study." *Hospital and Community Psychiatry* 39, no. 9 (1988): 953–958.

⁶ Allison Gilbert, Lorna Mower, Richard Van Dorn, Jeffrey Swanson, Christine Wilder, Pamela Clark Robbins, Karli Keator, Henry Steadman, Marvin Swartz. "Reductions in arrest under assisted outpatient treatment in New York." *Psychiatric Services* 61, no. 10 (2010): 996–999.