

Typical Roles and Responsibilities for AOT Collaborators

An effective assisted outpatient treatment (AOT) program requires collaboration from a variety of individuals and organizations. While the exact structure of each program may vary, certain core team members are typically essential for success. This guide outlines the roles and responsibilities of key AOT team members, as well as responsibilities that may be shared among the team. It is essential that at least one collaborator is designated to perform the shared responsibilities.

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Shared Responsibilities

Although each role within an AOT program has specific duties, there are several responsibilities that are commonly shared among team members, encompassing both program operations and treatment delivery. These responsibilities include:

- Attend quarterly planning and evaluation meetings with other key AOT collaborators.
- Contribute insights into program improvements from the perspective of your role.
- Maintain open communication with other team members to coordinate care and resolve issues efficiently.

- Support the participant's recovery by providing services or resources tailored to their needs.
- Engage the participant to encourage adherence to the treatment plan and court order.
- Foster a supportive environment that upholds the participant's rights, autonomy, and dignity.
- Ensure timely completion of tasks and responsibilities.
- Document and share relevant updates regarding participant progress or challenges with the team.
- Comply with all state reporting requirements, if any, and ensure that, at a minimum, the following data are collected and analyzed:
 - Number of individuals subject to AOT.
 - Demographics of participants.
 - Number of inpatient hospitalization days 12 months prior to and following an AOT order.
 - Number of arrests and days in jail 12 months prior to and following an AOT order.
- Identify gaps or challenges within the AOT program and propose strategies for improvement.
- Participate in quality improvement activities.
- Celebrate the success of the program!

AOT Participant

The AOT participant is under a court order to follow their treatment plan. Their responsibilities include:

- Follow the AOT order, including participating in evaluations, adhering to medication plans, and attending scheduled appointments.
- Attend court hearings as required.
- Communicate needs or issues (e.g., housing, basic resources, or appointments) to the treatment team.

Judge/Judicial Representative

The judge or judicial representative plays a critical role in the AOT program, ensuring that legal processes are followed, and that participants' rights are upheld. Their responsibilities include:

- Preside over the hearing and ensure that the judicial proceeding meets state statute and due process requirements.
- Determine whether the statutory AOT criteria is met according to a "clear and convincing" standard of proof.
- Issue order requiring the respondent to participate in treatment.
- Protect participant's due process rights.
- Ensure timelines for notices, hearings, and rulings are met.
- Help participants understand the AOT process, their rights and responsibilities, and encourage them to engage in treatment.
- Conduct hearings to review AOT orders when requested by the treatment team.
- Issue orders for emergency evaluations when a more restrictive treatment setting is recommended by the treatment team in accordance with statutory criteria.
- Conduct hearings on petitions to extend an AOT order and make determinations based on evidence and participant progress.
- Participate in quarterly planning and evaluation meetings with other key AOT collaborators and provide input on AOT program improvement.

Treatment Provider(s)

Treatment providers are the people who directly provide mental health services to individuals in AOT. Their responsibilities include:

- Provide mental health treatment based on the needs identified in the diagnostic assessment.
- Develop detailed treatment plans emphasizing engagement strategies and the participant's specific needs and goals.
- Provide, at a minimum, medication management and case coordination services.
- Engage in assertive outreach in the community if the participant begins to show signs of non-adherence.
- Actively engage the participant in treatment using motivational strategies.
- Inform the AOT monitor of concerns related to treatment adherence.
- Monitor progress and adjust treatment plan as needed.
- Evaluate each AOT participant shortly before the end of the AOT order to determine whether to recommend renewal of the order or transition to voluntary care. If necessary, petition the court for an extension of the AOT order.
- Petition the court for a continuation of the court order, if needed.
- Upon the successful program completion, ensure participants remain connected to treatment services to maintain stability and safety.
- Assist in developing, implementing, and improving the quality of the AOT program.
- Participate in quarterly planning and evaluation meetings with other key AOT collaborators and provide input on AOT program improvement.

AOT Monitor

The role of the AOT monitor varies significantly across jurisdictions, depending on the level of court involvement. In jurisdictions with minimal court oversight, the monitor often plays a more active role in managing and coordinating program operations. It is recommended that the AOT monitor operates independently from the court to maintain appropriate boundaries in communication. Their responsibilities are as follows:

- Monitor treatment adherence by meeting with case managers and other service providers; attend treatment team meetings as necessary, and by other means as needed.
- Monitor service providers to ensure they are providing care consistent with the treatment plan and assertive outreach when necessary. Attempt to resolve disputes between providers if they arise.
- Assist in case coordination by being knowledgeable about available community resources and working with the treatment team to access those resources as needed.
- Complete updates for the court in an accurate and timely manner.
- Provide accurate and timely reports or data to the court or mental health authority as required.
- Work with the court and legal partners to ensure legal documents are filed in a timely fashion.
- Assist in developing, implementing, and improving the quality of the AOT program.
- Develop relationships with key community partners, including, but not limited to, court personnel, community hospitals, law enforcement, crisis services, mental health service providers, family members, and advocates.
- Establish a mechanism(s) for regularly communicating with key community partners regarding

the AOT program and those being served by the program.

- Provide training for key community partners and present at educational forums upon request.
- Respond in a timely manner to questions or concerns from the public, key community partners, respondents, program participants, and treatment team members.
- Coordinate and participate in quarterly planning and evaluation meetings with other key AOT collaborators and provide input on AOT program improvement.

Attorney for the Petitioner

The attorney for the petitioner represents the person who is petitioning for AOT and plays a critical role in ensuring legal requirements are met. Their responsibilities include:

- Present evidence, including medical testimony, to meet the burden of proving the statutory AOT criteria.
- File various pleadings, including requests for hearings, requests for temporary detention and evaluation for hospitalization, and motions to continue or discontinue court orders.
- Apprise those testifying in support of the petition of what to expect in court.
- Collaborate, to the extent possible, with other AOT team members.
- Participate in quarterly planning and evaluation meetings with other key AOT collaborators and provide input on AOT program improvement.

Attorney for the Respondent/Participant

The attorney for the respondent/participant represents the person subject to the AOT petition or court order, ensuring their rights and interests are protected. Their responsibilities include:

- Advocate for and inform the respondent of their rights while balancing their safety and stability at all stages of AOT proceedings.
- Review records and interview witnesses for the hearing.
- Interview the respondent within a reasonable timeframe before the date of the hearing.
- Review the petition and supporting documentation, discuss the law, the options available, and the grounds on which the court-ordered mental health services are being sought.
- Prepare the respondent for what to anticipate in court.
- Inform the respondent of the potential benefits of AOT.
- Ensure the petitioner meets the legal burden of proof for statutory AOT criteria.
- Ensure the respondent has an opportunity to participate in the design and coordination of the AOT plan.
- Participate in quarterly planning and evaluation meetings with other key AOT collaborators and provide input on AOT program improvement.

Advocacy Organization

Local nonprofit entities, such as National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), provide education, support and advocacy for those living with mental illness, their families and other caregivers. Their responsibilities include:

- Educate family members, peer recovery specialists, and the community at large about AOT.
- Provide support for families and other caregivers with loved ones in AOT.
- Advocate for program improvement and expansion.
- Participate in quarterly planning and evaluation meetings with other key AOT collaborators and

provide input on AOT program improvement.

Emergency Departments and Crisis Services

Emergency departments and crisis service providers are responsible for clinical care of participants outside of the treatment provider's regular hours. Their responsibilities include:

- Accept participants brought in on orders of detention for emergency evaluation.
- Transfer participants to inpatient care promptly when necessary.
- Share relevant clinical information with treatment provider under the coordination of care exception in HIPAA.
- Provide clinical evaluation to court when ordered to do so.

Inpatient Psychiatric Units

Staff in inpatient psychiatric settings play a critical role in initiating the AOT process. Their responsibilities include:

- Identify and refer individuals who meet criteria for AOT.
- Provide necessary documentation to support the AOT petition in court.
- Collaborate with the outpatient treatment provider to develop a discharge plan and facilitate a smooth transition to outpatient care upon discharge.
- Admit participants back into care when needed.
- Identify a staff member to represent the inpatient unit in quarterly planning and evaluation meetings with AOT collaborators and contribute to program improvement.

Law Enforcement

Law enforcement has an important role to play in the AOT process. Their responsibilities include:

- Serve subpoenas and execute orders to convey as needed.
- Utilize Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) officers and/or co-responder teams for orders to convey, when available.
- Assist the treatment team by locating missing participants and transporting individuals in the least conspicuous manner while ensuring safety.
- Support safety checks.
- Participate in quarterly planning and evaluation meetings with AOT collaborators and provide input on program improvement.

Mental Health Authority

Mental health authorities vary widely in their structure and role, but generally they coordinate the delivery of mental health services across the state, county or region. In the AOT program, their responsibilities include:

- Accept AOT referrals from hospitals, law enforcement, family members, and other community members.
- File AOT petitions and requests for continuation.
- Review treatment plans to ensure that the AOT services listed are available, providers are willing to deliver them, and funding is available for the services outlined.
- Manage smooth transitions between levels of care and ensure warm handoffs.
- Comply with all state reporting requirements.

- Participate in quarterly planning and evaluation meetings with AOT collaborators and provide input on program improvements.

Evaluator

The evaluator or evaluation team is responsible for monitoring the processes and progress of the AOT team. Their responsibilities include:

- Assist with determining measurable and objective goals for the AOT program.
- Attend and participate in quarterly team meetings.
- Conduct program evaluation to assess how AOT is impacting participants and track progress toward other program goals, such as cost savings.
- Conduct process evaluation to determine areas of potential program improvement.
- Share findings with other members of the AOT team on a regular basis.