

Grave Disability Work Group 12/8/25

Present: Zoe Guttman, Mark Gale, Aaron Meyer, MD, Lynda Kaufman, Linda Mimms, Cheryl Smith, Lynn Gibbs, Teresa Pasquini, Shodoe Lange, Lauren Rettagliata, Alison Monroe, Susan Partovi, MD, Kaino Hopper

Transcript

https://otter.ai/u/fB9BIXq4_qsf_GQsyrFMDdMh_3o?view=summary

The Grave Disability Work Group discussed the challenges and discrepancies in the Care Court system, particularly the lack of a clear next step for involuntary care. Cheryl Smith shared her son's experience with inadequate judicial understanding and representation in Santa Barbara County. Dr. Meyer emphasized the need for better training for judges, especially those handling mental health cases. The group also explored the potential for state oversight and the creation of an ombudsman office to hold counties accountable for mental health care compliance. The conversation highlighted the need for comprehensive judicial training and legislative action to address systemic issues in mental health care.

Action Items

- [] Introduce Judge Manley to the group and see if he can provide input on statewide judicial training and education efforts.
- [] Look into the law (Welfare Institutions Code 10605) that may allow the Director of Social Services to hold counties accountable for not following the law, and research how this has been used in the past.
- [] Reach out to Reyes (staffer for Menjivar, chair of Senate Health Committee) and others to discuss the possibility of creating a state-level ombudsman to oversee county compliance with mental health laws.

Outline

Care Act Work Group Meeting Recap

- Susan Partovi asks Lauren Rettagliata to recap the Care Act work group meeting in LA.
- Lauren Rettagliata mentions Lynda Boyd's input on the roadmap for the Care Court and the discrepancy between county reports on Care Court's effectiveness.
- Lauren highlights the confusion around the real facts and the need for a clear next step in Care Court.

Training of Judges and Judge Trainings

- Susan Partovi discusses the need for better training of judges, specifically for Care Court and SB 43.
- Susan mentions Dr. Wood's connection with judicial trainings.
- Cheryl Smith shares her experience with her son's representation in court and the lack of understanding from judges about his serious mental illness.
- Susan Partovi and Dr. Meyer discuss the need for training general judges and specifically those in mental health courts.

Challenges in Judge Training and Care Court

- Cheryl Smith continues to describe her son's trials and the lack of understanding from judges about his mental health needs.
- Linda Mimms shares her frustration with the Care Court training and the lack of focus on schizophrenia and psychosis.
- Linda emphasizes the need for a path to involuntary care and the judges' reluctance to take responsibility for it.
- Susan Partovi and Dr. Meyer discuss the role of the Department of Health Care Services and Health Management Associates in training judges.

Systemic Issues in Judge Training and Care Court

- Susan Partovi and Dr. Meyer discuss the need for state oversight over counties' 5150 procedures and the inconsistencies in county practices.
- Cheryl Smith and Susan Partovi discuss the challenges of getting judges to recognize and address their loved ones' mental health needs.
- Aaron Meyer suggests the need for an ombudsman for California to hold counties accountable for mental health care.
- Zoe Guttman and Susan Partovi discuss the potential for expanding the existing ombudsman office or creating a new one.

Legal and Systemic Solutions for Judge Training

- Teresa Pasquini shares her experience with conservatorship and the challenges of navigating the legal system for mental health care.
- Linda Mimms highlights the issue of arraignment judges deeming mentally ill individuals competent to defend themselves.
- Aaron Meyer discusses the potential for using the Welfare and Institutions Code 10605 to hold counties accountable for failing to comply with mental health laws.
- Shadoe Jones (TAC) and Susan Partovi discuss the need for better training and understanding of mental health issues among judges.

Advocacy and Legislative Action for Judge Training

- Teresa Pasquini and Susan Partovi discuss the need for strong advocacy and legislative action to improve judge training and mental health care.
- Zoe Guttman and Susan Partovi discuss the potential for legislative solutions and the importance of connecting different mental health initiatives.
- Mark Gale, NAMI GLAC, shares information about the Judicial Council's efforts to train judges on mental health issues.
- Susan Partovi and Mark Gale discuss the possibility of inviting Judge Manley to provide input on statewide issues related to judge training.

Action Items and Next Steps

- Shadow Jones (TAC) is tasked with researching the legal statutes and consulting with attorneys on potential solutions.
- Zoe Guttman is tasked with discussing the ombudsman office expansion with Reyes/ Menjivar and other legislative staff.
- Susan Partovi is tasked with introducing the group to Judge Manley and gathering questions for him.
- Teresa Pasquini shares information about an informational hearing on the crisis continuum and the 988 system, highlighting the need for legislative action.

Chat:

2025-12-08 12:14:46 From Kaino Hopper to Everyone:

At Senate Hearing, there were several judges and attorneys, and I didn't think there was a willingness to use their role to prioritize medical treatment (in severe, persistent cases) over the civil rights issues.

2025-12-08 12:15:28 From Kaino Hopper to Everyone:

I wonder if the big conversation is what so many in GDWG have spoken before: civil rights compared to mental capacity to exercise those rights

Linda Mimms: 

2025-12-08 12:17:06 From Teresa Pasquini to Everyone:

self determination only

Kaino Hopper: 

2025-12-08 12:19:30 From Teresa Pasquini to Everyone:

The state leaders don't help either.

Kaino Hopper: 

2025-12-08 12:28:52 From Lauren Rettagliata to Everyone:

Does anyone in the hierarchy of DHCS see the need for the Ombudsman Office? If not can we get Kate Warburton interested in bringing this forward?

2025-12-08 12:29:23 From Aaron Meyer to Everyone:

CARE Act WG had a slide on Ombudsman and Kate Warburton is aware

Kaino Hopper: 

2025-12-08 12:30:27 From Lauren Rettagliata to Everyone:

Yes, I am aware of her work so she may be who we need to get DHCS to see the need for an Ombudsman

2025-12-08 12:31:11 From Aaron Meyer to Everyone:

<https://codes.findlaw.com/ca/welfare-and-institutions-code/wic-sect-10605/>

2025-12-08 12:39:05 From Lauren Rettagliata to Everyone:

thank you Aaron--this looks very interesting

2025-12-08 12:45:52 From Lauren Rettagliata to Everyone:

Judges seldom check to see if the Plan proposed by the individual has been checked to see if it is viable. Many times Conservators, the Public Defender or County Counsel need to

check to see if the individual before them has a plan that is real. Has the living arrangement been verified, has how they will receive needed treatment been verified, who or what entity will be helping them with their finances? Are they receiving the SSI, Medi-cal, Medicare benefits they are entitled to receive?

2025-12-08 12:48:07 From Teresa Pasquini to Everyone:

Oh, I forgot to tell you about an informational hearing that happened last week on the Crisis Continuum/988 system. It was 3 hours with many panels. I did not see the 5150 issue with Law Enforcement raised.

[] Reach out to Judge Rubinson, an LA County judge who has been involved with the group, to get his perspective and counsel on training judges.

[] Review the statute in Welfare Institutions Code 10605 regarding the Director of Social Services' authority to hold counties accountable, and follow up on the viability of using this. (Shadoe Jones)

[] Explore the possibility of involving the Steinberg Institute and Karen Lawson, the director, in efforts to improve judicial training. (Zoe Guttman)

2025-12-08 13:00:03 From Lauren Rettagliata to Everyone:

Stephen V Manley term ends on Jan 4 2027

2025-12-08 13:04:00 From Alison M to Everyone:

Katy of FASMI came to kind of an impasse on the issue, having pestered everyone local, and was kinda hoping NAMI CA would take over

2025-12-08 13:04:02 From Lynda Kaufmann to Everyone:

Mobile ccriss will not come out and police wont either... sigh

2025-12-08 13:04:18 From Alison M to Everyone:

The issue being getting 5150 and transport capabilities when needed

2025-12-08 13:06:16 From Alison M to Everyone:

There are people at NAMI CA besides Jessica who are supposed to be working on 5150s

2025-12-08 13:07:38 From Kaino Hopper to Everyone:

Replies to "There are people at NAMI CA besides Jessica who ar...":

Danny Offer, Nancy Elder, & Sasha are working on 5150s. When I hear about the next meeting with them I will send it to Susan for GDWG distribution

2025-12-08 13:07:59 From Mark Gale, NAMI GLAC to Everyone:

That would be great