



Board Agenda Item 48

DATE: August 19, 2025

TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBMITTED BY: Antoinette Taillac, Public Defender

SUBJECT: Retroactive California Assistance, Recovery and Empowerment Court Grant Application and Agreement

RECOMMENDED ACTION(S):

1. **Retroactively approve and authorize the Public Defender's previous submittal of a grant application to the State Bar of California, establishment of CARE Court funding, for the period July 1, 2024, through January 1, 2026 (\$320,498); and**
2. **Retroactively ratify the Public Defender's execution of the retroactive Grant Award Agreement for funding of the CARE court, for the period July 1, 2024, through January 1, 2026 (\$320,498)**

There is no additional increase in Net County Cost (NCC) associated with the recommended actions, which will allow for the retroactive submission of the retroactive grant application / agreement with the State Bar of California for the Fiscal Year 2025- 2026 CARE Court Grant Program (CARE). The recommended agreement provides State revenue grant funds to the County designed to assist people with untreated severe mental illness who are at risk of deteriorating further without intervention in Fresno County. The CARE court application was submitted to meet the State's deadline, contingent on your Board's approval. The second recommended action requests your Board ratify the Public Defender's execution of the grant agreement. This item is countywide.

ALTERNATIVE ACTION(S):

If your Board does not approve the recommended actions, the Department will be required to return the CARE Court funding for FY 2024-25 out of their FY 2025-26 allocated NCC and will not be funded for FY 2025-26. The loss of this grant will result in increased caseloads for current Public Defender staff to absorb the CARE Court population as this is a mandated program.

RETROACTIVE AGREEMENT:

The Department received the agreement from the State Bar on October 7, 2024. The Department is currently reviewing their internal oversight and tracking of agenda items to improve responsiveness and timeliness in bringing items before your Board.

FISCAL IMPACT:

If approved, there is no increase in NCC associated with these actions. There is no match requirement for the receipt of funds. However, if your Board does not approve the recommended actions as indicated in the Alternative Action section, the Department will have to absorb these costs within their NCC allocation.

DISCUSSION:

During the 2021-22 Legislative Session, Senate Bill 1338 was enacted, creating the Community Assistance, Recovery, and Empowerment Court Program (Welfare and Institutions Code sections 5970-5987), as amended in 2023 by Senate Bill No. 35, which in effect provided clean up language for SB 1338. In 2024, Assembly Bill No. 107 was enacted, which allocated approximately \$17,000,000 stateside for CARE Court funding to be distributed by the Judicial Council through the State Bar via grant awards to qualified legal services projects.

The CARE Court is a proposed framework to deliver mental health and substance use disorder services to the most severely impaired Californians who too often languish - suffering in homelessness or incarceration - without the treatment they desperately need. It connects a person in crisis with a court-ordered CARE Plan for up to 12 months, with the possibility to extend for an additional 12 months. The framework provides individuals with a clinically appropriate, community-based set of services and supports that are culturally and linguistically competent. This includes court-ordered stabilization medications, wellness and recovery supports, and connection to social services and housing.

To date, CARE Act funding has supported staffing and early program implementation, including salaries for existing personnel, limited-term administrative support, and costs related to planning and interagency coordination. Initial expenditures also covered essential technology and supplies to support new workflows. The Department is still evaluating additional staffing needs, as current staff are working on cases of higher-level complexity requiring intensive coordination. Remaining funds will also support infrastructure needs, staff training, and tools to evaluate program effectiveness.

If grant funding for this program is discontinued, all additional positions will be deleted.

ATTACHMENTS INCLUDED AND/OR ON FILE:

On file with Clerk - 24-25 CARE Court Funds Agreement

CAO ANALYST:

Sevag Tateosian