

Local advocates are pushing for the program along the same lines: They're determined to see it prioritized and implemented. Colleen Phipps, president of NAMI, said the grant is an incredible opportunity, but the county could choose to fund an assisted outpatient treatment program with MHSA dollars, irrespective of whether or not they get the grant.

"I get calls every week from people who are in a position that they cannot help their loved ones. And that person is not quite dangerous enough to cause a crime or ... to be [placed in a psychiatric hold]," she said. "With Laura's Law ... they have somebody standing by them ... so they get on their feet and they start to feel stable."

Similarly, Currier argued that many homeless people she meets through her nonprofit work who have schizophrenia, bipolar

disorder, multiple personality disorder and/or substance abuse disorder would qualify for such a program. In the meantime, they are falling through the cracks.

Both women told the CN&R they believe assisted outpatient treatment could have helped their loved ones. In 2003, Phipps' son caused a fatal car accident while in a psychotic state. He was convicted of murder and drew a lengthy prison sentence.

"I would not want this tragedy that happened to our family to happen to any other families," Phipps said.

Currier told the CN&R that her son could have been helped on that first day back in October, rather than 13 weeks later, while he was in the midst of a "full-blown, astronomical psychosis."

"Laura's Law would've given the opportunity for him to ... get the help that he needed without being a criminal." □

This guy saves you money.

WEEKLY DOSE



How to respond to coronavirus

According to the World Health Organization, as of press time, there were 20,471 confirmed cases of coronavirus in China, and 425 deaths in the country as a result. But it is not time to panic here. So far, the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has found only 11 people from five U.S. states (including California) who have tested positive for the virus. Still, there are a few things the American public should know, and the CDC has outlined three do's and three don'ts:

- Do visit [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) and stay informed.
- Do take regular cold- and flu-season precautions (wash hands, avoid contact with sick people, etc.).
- If you feel sick with fever, cough or difficulty breathing, and have recently been to China or in contact with someone who has, do call before visiting a doctor's office or an emergency room.
- Don't travel to China until the outbreak is under control.
- Don't feel the need to use face masks in public.
- Don't show prejudice to people of Asian descent.

STDs CAN BE PREVENTED.

Half of all new STDs are in people under age 25.

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