

# Mentoring Neighboring Communities to Start AOT Programs

Establishing assisted outpatient treatment (AOT) programs is more than just a local initiative — it's a collaborative journey toward comprehensive mental health support. As experienced AOT programs develop, they play a crucial role in helping neighboring communities create their own infrastructure, ultimately expanding care for individuals with severe mental illness (SMI).

When multiple counties within a state develop robust AOT programs, they create a more seamless support system that allows for easier case transfers, increased funding opportunities, and a stronger collective learning environment. This interconnected approach ensures that individuals with SMI receive consistent, high-quality care, regardless of their location.

## Strategies for Mentoring and Expanding AOT

### Share success through data and storytelling

Transforming data into narrative is key to inspiring other communities. By presenting outcome data to leaders at the administrative office of the courts or the state mental health department, you're not just sharing statistics, you're demonstrating real-world impact. Craft presentations that highlight personal stories alongside quantitative results, showing how AOT genuinely transforms lives.

### Increase awareness

Visibility is crucial for AOT program growth. Create a program brochure and website and seek opportunities to share your experiences at professional conferences like those hosted by statewide chapters of National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) International, National Association of Counties (NACo), and other relevant professional conferences. Engage local media to showcase your program's successes and integrate AOT discussions into existing professional training and education platforms for judges, case managers, psychiatrists, attorneys and other applicable professions.

### Create learning experiences

Invite key leaders in neighboring counties to observe your AOT program in action. These firsthand experiences provide invaluable insights that no report or presentation can fully capture. Encourage your program partners to build direct connections with counterparts in other regions, fostering a culture of open dialogue and mutual support.

### **Leverage lived experiences**

The most powerful advocates are those who have directly benefited from AOT. Identify program graduates and family members willing to share their journeys. By providing platforms for their voices— whether through media interviews or advocacy events — you humanize the program's impact. Consider offering stipends to acknowledge their time and emotional investment in sharing their stories. [Learn more about how to effectively share personal stories to advocate for change here.](#)

### **Facilitate strategic connections**

Host networking events that bring together key leaders from neighboring counties. An invitation signed by your presiding judge can lend significant credibility, and a well-structured program that combines success stories, implementation tips, and interactive Q&A sessions can spark genuine interest and momentum.

### **Build a statewide ecosystem**

View AOT expansion as a collaborative network rather than a competitive landscape. Share resources, best practices, and lessons learned. Work toward developing a statewide learning community in the form of an AOT Coalition that can effectively advocate for funding and program and policy support. The ultimate goal? Hosting a comprehensive statewide AOT conference that strengthens partnerships and accelerates program development.

### **Moving forward: Resources and support**

The journey of expanding AOT is ongoing. Seek out clinical toolkits, best practice guidelines, and training opportunities. Remember that technical assistance and support are always available to help you navigate challenges and refine your approach.

Every step taken to expand AOT is a step toward ensuring that individuals with SMI receive the compassionate, structured support they deserve.

*For more information and technical assistance, please contact TAC at [AOT@TAC.ORG](mailto:AOT@TAC.ORG).*