



District of Columbia Treatment Law Report Card

Last Updated: January 2026

Method and scoring: *State involuntary civil commitment laws* are evaluated using a 100-point grading scale. The scoring criteria are in accordance with TAC's values and policy recommendations. Up to 50 points are awarded to a state based on the quality of its inpatient commitment law, and up to 50 points are awarded based on the quality of its outpatient commitment law. *Grades reflect solely what is written in law and not how those laws are implemented or applied.* Final letter grades are computed using the following scale:

97 or above	A+	87–89	B+	77–79	C+	67–69	D+	59 or below	F
93–96	A	83–86	B	73–76	C	63–66	D		
90–92	A-	80–82	B-	70–72	C-	60–62	D-		

PART ONE: Inpatient Commitment Statute (up to 50 points)			
Criterion	Citation	Specifications	Points
1. Citizen access to court, emergency evaluation (5 pts)	D.C. Code § 21-521	☐ Authorizes family/enumerated adults (3 pts) ☐ Authorizes any responsible adult (2 pts)	0
2. Quality of emergency petition process (5 pts)	D.C. Code § 21-522	☐ Process specified and reasonable (2 pts) ☒ Timelines specified and reasonable (2 pts) ☒ Responsible entities identified (1 pt) ☐ Requires certification by more than one professional (-2 pts) ☐ Emergency evaluation criteria inconsistent with inpatient commitment criteria (-5 pts) <i>FD-12 petition process</i>	3
3. Emergency hold duration (5 pts)	D.C. Code § 21-523	☒ At least 48-hour hold allowed (3 pts) ☐ At least 72-hour hold allowed (2 pts) <i>48 hours (See comment 1 below)</i>	3
4. Citizen access to court, inpatient petition (5 pts)	D.C. Code § 21-541(a)	☒ Authorizes family/enumerated adults (3 pts) ☐ Authorizes any responsible adult (2 pts) <i>Spouse, parent, legal guardian</i>	3
5. Quality of criteria for harm or violence to self or others (up to 10 pts)	D.C. Code § 21-541	☒ Contains explicit criteria (10 pts) ☒ Language is vague/ambiguous (-3 pts) ☐ Harm must be imminent (-3 pts)	7
6. Quality of criteria for grave disability/basic needs (up to 10 pts)		☐ Contains explicit criteria (10 pts) ☐ Language is vague/ambiguous (-3 pts) ☐ Endangerment must be imminent (-3 pts) ☐ Criteria require family to turn person out of home to receive treatment (-3 pts) ☐ Unreasonably high risk of harm (-3 pts) <i>(See comment 2 below)</i>	0
7. Quality of criteria for psychiatric deterioration (up to 10 pts)		☐ Contains explicit criteria (10 pts) ☐ Language is vague/ambiguous (-3 pts) <i>(See comment 3 below)</i>	0
SUBTOTAL			16
PART ONE: Extra Credit			
1. Specifies in which court a petition for inpatient commitment shall be filed (1 pt)	D.C. Code §§ 21-501, 21-541(a)	<i>Commission on Mental Health who reports to the Superior Court</i>	1
Extra Credit			1
PART ONE TOTAL			17

PART TWO: Outpatient Commitment Statute (up to 50 points)			
Criterion	Citation	Specifications	Points
1. AOT explicitly authorized (5 pts)	D.C. Code § 21-545(b)(2)	☐ Requires local government to adopt (-3 pts)	5
2. Citizen access to court for AOT (5 pts)	DC Code Ann. § 21-541(a)	☒ Authorizes family/enumerated adults (3 pts) ☐ Authorizes any responsible adult (2 pts) ☐ Authorizes citizen petition to mental health system only (-2 pts)	3
3. Criteria sufficiently broad to provide actual access (up to 10 pts)	D.C. Code § 21-545(b)(2)	Evaluate applicable provision only: ☒ If inpatient/outpatient criteria are the same: ☐ Inpatient criteria include psychiatric deterioration standard (10 pts) <u>or</u> ☒ No psychiatric deterioration standard, adequate grave disability standard (5 pts) or ☐ If outpatient criteria are distinct from inpatient criteria: ☐ Allows consideration of length of treatment history ≥ 36 months (2 pts) ☐ Does not exclude periods of incarceration or hospitalization (-1 pt) ☐ Does not limit application to those currently dangerous or unstable (4 pts) ☐ Does not limit application to those refusing service/lacking insight (4 pts)	5
4. Authorizes AOT directly from community (5 pts)	D.C. Code § 21-541(a)		5
5. Procedures sufficiently detailed to guide practitioners (up to 5 pts)	D.C. Code §§ 21-541 to 21-548	☒ Process specified and reasonable (1 pt) ☒ Timelines specified and reasonable (1 pt) ☒ Responsible entities identified (1 pt) ☐ Periodic reporting to court required (1 pt) ☒ Renewal process expressly specified (1 pt)	4
6. Procedures require the treatment plan to be shared with the court (5 pts)			0
7. Specifies procedures and consequences for nonadherence (5 pts)	D.C. Code § 21-548		5
8. Duration of initial order	D.C. Code § 21-545(b)(2)	☐ = 90 days (2 pts) <u>or</u> ☒ > 90 days (5 pts) One year	5
9. Duration of continued order	D.C. Code § 21-545.01	☐ = 180 days (2 pts) <u>or</u> ☒ > 180 days (5 pts) Not to exceed One year	5
SUBTOTAL			37
PART TWO: Extra Credit			
1. Specifies court for AOT (1 pt)	D.C. Code §§ 21-501, 21-541(a)	Commission on Mental Health reports to the Superior Court	1
2. Court monitoring of voluntary settlement agreements (5 pts)			
Extra Credit			1
PART TWO TOTAL			38

FINAL SCORE	
PART ONE TOTAL	17
PART TWO TOTAL	38
TOTAL	56
TREATMENT LAW GRADE	F

Comments:

1. Emergency admission: Up to 48 hours; if a subsequent court petition is filed and granted, up to 7 days.
2. Court opinion has read “grave disability” as a qualifying “danger to self” under the criteria, but the code is not explicit, and use of this provision for grave disability has decreased sharply.
3. Standard lacks consideration of future deterioration, but impact softened by language taking focus off current condition (“likely to injure self or others *if not committed*”).