

A San Diego husband calls for CARE

The everyday activities that come together to build our lives weren't always the norm for a San Diego woman. Instead, she was married and had a young child while suffering from schizophrenia: an uncommon but severe mental illness that causes hallucinations, extreme disorganization and shorter lifespans for untreated patients who suffer from it.

Before she had support, her husband worried as he watched his wife struggle with her illness. Day after day, they would awaken in the morning, and he would leave for work knowing that his wife would face another day filled with fear and confusion. He learned that she'd leave the house, wander the streets, and become agitated and confused. She couldn't take care of her basic needs and hygiene, and she became estranged from their son. Four times, psychiatric emergency response teams intervened because her illness created extreme challenges in everyday life. Her husband knew that something needed to change for her, and filing a CARE petition made that change possible.

California's CARE Act is designed to ensure people with schizophrenia get the care that they need: a recommended combination of medication, wrap-around services and housing. Family members, other loved ones, behavioral health and other healthcare professionals, among others can file petitions. This patient's husband filed a petition that sparked much-needed action. Today, this woman has a CARE agreement in place, and that plan includes a long acting injectable medication and support services, along with the housing that she shares with her husband and son. This combination of services, including stabilizing medication, has made it possible for her to be present during key developmental years in her son's life. Their family has been enjoying what we recognize as everyday moments of life, as well as family vacations. And she has gone on a job interview, taking one more step toward living the life she wants to lead.

CARE makes it possible for local teams, at the county level, to make treatment and housing available to patients living with schizophrenia. Just as every patient is different, every approach to CARE will be different. Behavioral health specialists, court staff and other professionals put their expertise, passion for caregiving and creativity to work to file CARE petitions, tap CARE resources and craft the custom support plans that patients need to ensure they have longer-term support. [Click here to learn more](#) about the petition process and access CARE resources for your county.

Note: CARE respondent consented to share their story.