



CASEY'S LAW

# GETTING STARTED

A starter guide to helping you get The Matthew  
“Casey” Wethington Act for Substance Abuse Intervention  
in your state

# The Guide

## 1. Get Acquainted

If you are already acquainted with your State Representative and Senator, you have a significant advantage. You will need a member of the House or Senate as the primary sponsor of the bill. If you have a primary sponsor in both, that will aid the bill in its passage. Additional sponsors of the proposed legislation in both the House and the Senate creates a strong show of support which can boost your efforts significantly and greatly increase the possibility of successful passage.

## 2. Educate, educate educate

You In my naivete, my erroneous assumption was that all legislators would be well acquainted with the disease of addiction that was affecting our state. Even though, our world has been experiencing a pandemic of drug addiction, education about this chronic, progressive, potentially fatal disease is paramount to making the case for involuntary commitment.

### **SUGGESTION: Enlist Legislators to Educate their Colleagues**

Legislators who have a passion for treatment and recovery can be your best ambassadors for promoting support for this legislation. Ask that one or more such legislator(s) use a meeting, such as or committee meeting as an informational opportunity, explaining the urgency of intervention on this disease and the benefits of treatment and recovery. Specialists in the field could also be invited to share their expertise.

**These are steps that need to be taken long before the session starts, in the interim between sessions. Building support and education are building blocks for the rest of the process.**

## 3. Talk

Talk to anyone and everyone who will listen to what you are attempting to do to help the families of your state. You never know who may know someone who knows someone, and so on who may know someone who can be of tremendous help and influence.

## 4. Ask

Ask for help from friends, family, community groups and organizations who have the same interest in bringing this hopeful option to your state.

## 5. Enlist

Enlist the help of other families who are also passionate about moving the legislation forward. If you are already involved in a support group, you may find support from other family members here. It is always good to have as many people as possible on the ready to testify in hearings and/or committee meetings on the state level, to make phone calls, write letters, circulate petitions, etc.

## 6. Petitions

With the help of volunteers, circulate petitions to demonstrate to your legislators the need and desire to have this intervention option available to families. These signatures will demonstrate the will of their constituents who have entrusted them with the opportunity of representing the people of your state.

## 7. Precedents

Use the map provided under this tab as proof that your state would not be setting a precedent in adopting legislation or strengthening pre-existing legislation that provides involuntary commitment for substance use disorders. If your state is not one of the 37 states that has legislation similar to Casey's Law, there may already exist some type of mental inquest law which could provide a starting point since this type of legislation is similar to the one being proposed.

## The Guide

### 8. Sponsor

When the session begins, you will need at least one sponsor of the bill who will assign a person to craft the language of the bill. In KY, that person is a member of the Legislative Research Commission. In my case, I had the opportunity to work closely with this person so that I was aware of the language of the bill. Once my representative had secured a member of the Legislative Research Commission to draft the bill, there was an opportunity to sit down with that person and other individuals who held the two highest positions in the Division of Mental Health & Substance Abuse at the state level.

### 9. Committee Members

Once the legislation is introduced, get acquainted with every member of the committee to which it is assigned and provide each one with educational materials. Arrange one-on-one visits with each member.

If the bill is called up for a committee hearing, ask to testify before the committee and bring as many supporters as possible to this meeting.

### 10. Assume Nothing

Do not assume that the legislators understand addiction and most importantly the urgency with which this disease needs to be addressed.

## Additional Comments and Suggestions

### Stories are powerful.

There is tremendous power in stories and **YOU** are the expert on your story and the story of your loved one(s). Casey's story was all I had when I went to the legislature. If you have data, statistics on overdoses, or any other documentation of the problem, that is a plus but not a necessity.

I was told that I needed statistics when I went to our state capital in Frankfort, KY. All I had was Casey's story. **NEVER DOUBT THE POWER OF STORIES.** It was Casey's story that touched the hearts of the legislators who were responsible for the passage of Casey's Law in 2004. Even then, (prior to the drug pandemic we are currently experiencing), there were legislators who either had a constituent and/or family member who had experienced a problem with alcohol and/or other drugs. Sometimes we forget that legislators are moms, dads, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, etc. Legislators are people, people who have stories of their own and in 2004, some of these legislators were willing to share their experiences and frustration, frustration over the lack of a hopeful option for families.

Please find documents on this website that can be useful as you make your case for this legislation.

Also on the website, on the "Get Casey's Law in Your State" page, you can give your permission to list your name and email so that others who live in your state can connect with you and choose to become part of your advocacy effort.

### Casey's Law Works!

From our last report from the AOC (Administrative Office of the Courts) in Frankfort, KY, there had been more than 1,000 judgments ordered for Casey's Law. That is more than a thousand opportunities for individuals to receive help and hope of recovery. If you have 12 minutes to spare, there is a video on YouTube (Casey's Law-Speaking Hope for Recovery) that highlights individuals who credit Casey's Law with being a vital part of their recovery.

Lastly, **TAKE EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE YOUR STORY AND MAKE THOSE OPPORTUNITES OFTEN!** You never know, the person you're talking to may know someone who knows someone (and so on) who could be a great asset to your cause.



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[caseyslaw.org](http://caseyslaw.org)