

## Addiction and the Brain

Today we recognize addiction as a chronic disease that changes both brain structure and function. Just as cardiovascular disease damages the heart and diabetes impairs the pancreas, addiction hijacks the brain. This happens as the brain goes through a series of changes, beginning with recognition of pleasure and ending with a drive toward compulsive behavior.

Repeated exposure to an addictive substance or behavior causes nerve cells in the nucleus accumbens and the prefrontal cortex (the area of the brain involved in planning and executing tasks) to communicate in a way that couples liking something with needing it, in turn driving a person to go after it. That is, it becomes more about being normal than about being "high".

### CaseysLaw.org

[facebook.com/groups/caseyslaw/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/caseyslaw/)

Where can I find a copy of the Law?  
[www.lrc.state.ky.us](http://www.lrc.state.ky.us). Click on the "Legislative Resources" link and choose KRS 222.430 to 222.437.

A copy of the petition can be obtained at the circuit clerk's office by requesting Form #700A, the Verified Petition for Involuntary Treatment of Alcohol/Drug Abuse.

## Myths & Facts About Drug Addiction

- **Drug addiction is a choice.** Research shows that long-term substance use alters brain chemistry. These changes can cause intense cravings, impulse control issues, and the compulsion to continue to use.
- **Addiction only affects those who are weak, uneducated, or have low morals.** Addiction does not discriminate. Addiction affects the lives of people of all ages, ethnicities, cultures, religions, communities, and socioeconomic statuses. Addiction is not a result of low morals. Often those suffering from addiction behave in ways that violate their personal beliefs, values, and morals. Addiction is an equal opportunity disease.
- **Involuntary treatment is not effective.** Treatment does not have to be voluntary. Court ordered treatment can be just as successful.
- **People can successfully finish treatment in a couple of weeks.** The best predictor of success is length of treatment. Patients who remain at least 1 year are twice as likely to remain drug free. Addiction is a chronic disorder & may require longer term treatment as well as repeated treatment.
- **People who continue to abuse drugs or relapse after treatment are hopeless.** Drug addiction is chronic and recurrence does not mean failure, rather additional treatment.

Addiction does not discriminate.  
It is an equal-opportunity disease.



## There Was No Law And Then...



## Casey Died

## A HOPEFUL Option Lighting the Way to Recovery

The Matthew Casey Wethington Act  
for Substance Abuse Intervention,  
(KRS (KY Revised Statute) 222.430 – 222.437)

## Charlotte's Journey Through Casey's Law

After Casey's Law was passed in July of 2004, Charlotte persevered in the fight against heroin. She is a true leader in advocating recovery and has provided a light at the end of the tunnel for so many. Charlotte helped establish a grief support group called PEACE that comforts other families who have lost their loved ones. Charlotte hosted a monthly cable show "Guide to Feeling Better" which attempts to dispel myths and misconceptions about mental health and substance use disorders. Charlotte and her husband Jim have restored Casey's 1967 Volkswagen Kombi Bus with the intention of providing the life-saving drug Narcan (Naloxone) and other invaluable resources throughout Northern Kentucky. Charlotte worked for a decade as recovery advocate for Transitions, Inc. She continues to serve in many capacities related to recovery advocacy including speaking at every opportunity about the disease of addiction. She does this in hope of raising awareness and inspiring others to advocacy. Her unfaltering efforts and Casey's Law itself have already saved so many lives, providing a HOPEFUL option for those suffering from addiction and their loved ones.



The Enquirer/Patrick Reddy



### Casey's Story

Casey Wethington died at 23 years old from a heroin overdose. He suffered from a treatable disease that does NOT have to be fatal.

Casey was an energetic young man who enjoyed life until it was "taken" by drugs. As a boy, he participated in a variety of sports such as soccer, baseball, basketball, and wrestling. He enjoyed collecting baseball cards, playing video games, playing the guitar, riding bikes, and skateboarding. All of that changed when he "didn't know" what he liked "to do to have fun anymore" because he had started using drugs.

Casey's middle-class upbringing did not matter in the least when it came to the disease of addiction. Casey never intended to become addicted to drugs when he used the first time. What he did not realize was that his using would progress from abusing to dependence and then to the disease of addiction.

Casey's early drug use caused his development to be arrested at the age of 14 or 15. Regardless of that fact, and the fact that he suffered from an ultimately fatal disease, he was expected to respond as a normal, healthy young adult and choose treatment for himself. Parental intervention was discouraged and denied. Now it is too late for Casey but because of him, there is hope for others who suffer from addiction.

It is your responsibility to help change the stigma attached to addiction and be a part of the solution!

### Why?

Casey's Law provides a means of intervening with someone who is unable to recognize his or her need for treatment due to their impairment. This law will allow parents, relatives, and/or friends to petition the court for treatment on behalf of the person who has a substance use disorder.

"Every effort to intervene on his disease was stymied because he was over the age of 18 and was not in the criminal justice system. I was told that "he has to want to, lose enough and hit bottom." That is contrary to the best practices for treatment of any other chronic progressive potentially fatal disease. With other diseases, we know that the sooner the disease is recognized, the longer it's treated, the better the chances for recovery."

-Charlotte Wethington

### The Steps to help and hope

- **Schedule appointments for evaluations** with 2 qualified health professionals, one of whom must be a physician.
- **File petition (700A)** - Petition is filed with the circuit court clerk in the county of the person with the substance use disorder (respondent) by the spouse, relative, friend or guardian (petitioner). The court reviews the petition, (if there is probable cause), orders that two evaluations be conducted and sets a court date within 14 days.
- **Return evaluations immediately and no later than 24 hours prior to the court date.**
- **Locate a detox and treatment facility immediately after the court date is set.** The petitioner bears the responsibility and right to choose the facility.
- **Treatment is ordered** based on the evaluations and can be ordered from up to 60 and not more than 360 days, depending on the request of the petitioner and the results of the hearing.