

# HOT TOPICS IN MENTAL HEALTH & LAW: CIVIL COMMITMENT

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## “Lived Experiences with Civil Commitment”

Presented by Carolynn Ponzoha, Karen Schilde, and Laura Van Tosh

February 4, 2025



CENTER FOR MENTAL HEALTH, POLICY & THE LAW

UNIVERSITY *of* WASHINGTON

# ABOUT THE CENTER FOR MENTAL HEALTH, POLICY & THE LAW

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The Center for Mental Health, Policy, and the Law (CMHPL) is housed within the University of Washington (UW) Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences in the UW School of Medicine.

The CMHPL's mission is to address the most urgent issues arising at the interface of mental health and the law, in order to help justice-involved people with mental illness lead full and productive lives.

**Learn more on our website:** <https://cmhpl.psychiatry.uw.edu/>

# HOT TOPICS IN MENTAL HEALTH & LAW: CIVIL COMMITMENT

**November 12, 12:00–1:00 p.m. PT**

“Civil Commitment 101: Overview of History and Current Practices”

*Shadoe Jones, JD*

**December 13, 12:00–1:00 p.m. PT**

“Civil Commitment Through the Ethics Lens: How We Got Here”

*Philip Candilis, MD*

**January 7, 12:00–1:00 p.m. PT**

“Designated Crisis Responders and the Involuntary Treatment Act in Washington State”

*Dawn Macready-Santos, LICSW and Laura Pippin, MSP*

**February 4, 12:00–1:00 p.m. PT**

“Lived Experiences with Civil Commitment”

*Carolynn Ponzoha, Karen Schilde, Laura Van Tosh*

**March 4, 12:00–1:00 p.m. PT**

“An Academic-State-Community Partnership to Create a CBT Continuum of Care for Involuntary Committees in Washington State”

*Sarah Kopelovich, PhD, ABPP*

**April 1, 12:00–1:00 p.m. PT**

Youth civil commitment in WA

*Shawgi Silver, MD*

**May 13, 12:00–1:00 p.m. PT**

“Policy Perspectives on Washington’s Continuum of Care for Severe Mental Illness”

*Manka Dhingra, JD*

**June 10, 12:00–1:00 p.m. PT**

Final panel and Q&A

*Manka Dhingra, Shadoe Jones, Sarah Kopelovich, Dawn Macready-Santos, Laura Pippin, Laura Van Tosh*

**Learn more and register: [bit.ly/cmhpl](https://bit.ly/cmhpl)**



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# RECORDINGS & CONTINUING EDUCATION

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- > The recording and presentation slides will be made available on our website within 1 week. We will email attendees with the link.
- > Continuing education is only available for attendees who attend the live Zoom session, not for those who watch the recording.
- > Certificates of attendance will be available for attendees who indicated interest. You will receive an email from [cmhpl@uw.edu](mailto:cmhpl@uw.edu) with additional details.
- > Continuing Medical Education is available:
  - UW faculty and staff ONLY: You received an email from [cmhpl@uw.edu](mailto:cmhpl@uw.edu) with instructions and will need to sign-in via text by 2:00 p.m. PT.
  - For non-UW learners, we will track attendance via Zoom. You do not need to log in or update your name on Zoom, as attendance is tracked with your unique Zoom link.



# DISCLOSURES

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Today's speakers,Carolynn Ponzoha, Karen Schilde, and Laura Van Tosh, have no financial relationships with an ineligible company relevant to this presentation to disclose.

None of the planners have relevant financial relationship(s) to disclose with ineligible companies whose primary business is producing, marketing, selling, re-selling, or distributing healthcare products used by or on patients.

# QUESTIONS


To submit a question, please click the Q&A icon on Zoom.



**Reminder:** The series will conclude with a panel discussion and Q&A on June 10, 2025.

# FINAL LOGISTICS

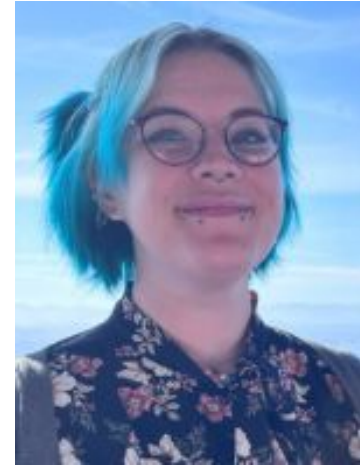
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- > The opinions expressed herein are the views of the speakers, and do not reflect an official position of the CMHPL or the UW. No official support or endorsement of the opinions described in this presentation from the CMHPL or the UW is intended or should be inferred.
- > Automated captions are available. In the meeting controls toolbar, click the Show Captions icon. 
- > Please complete the evaluation poll at the end of this session.

# CAROLYNN PONZOHA

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Carolynn Ponzoha is a mental health advocate living with schizoaffective disorder, borderline personality disorder, and complex PTSD. She spreads awareness of psychosis through online videos and discussions. Apart from her work spreading psychosis awareness, she is in recovery from addiction with five years sober, and attributes a large part of her mental wellness to sobriety.





# LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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- > Describe experiences of being an involuntary patient/family member in an Involuntary Treatment Act (ITA) process.
- > Consider how negative aspects of ITA could be modified and improved.
- > Identify alternative interventions to prevent crises.





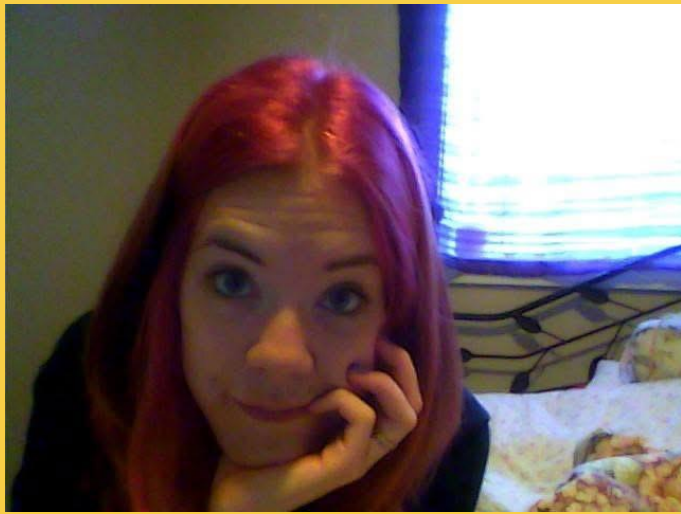
## Who I Am

- Mental Health Advocate
- Psychosis education and awareness
- TikTok & YouTube - "Psychotic in Seattle"
- Links: [TikTok](#) [YouTube](#)
- History of psychosis
- Voluntarily/involuntarily hospitalized multiple times

# Before Psychosis

- Outdoor Education and Leadership major at Central Wyoming College
- Wilderness medicine and wilderness therapy
- Left school due to worsening mental health and bullying





# Psychotic Episode

- Slow progression
- Anosognosia
- Safety



# Barriers to Care

- Lack of education
- Social isolation
- Bed availability



# Hospitalization

- Fear/Confusion
- Disconnect
- Treatment by staff
- Treatment by other patients
- Discharged early

SURT MITE Original  
copy (in Blue)

SUPERIOR COURT OF WASHINGTON FOR

ISLAND  SKAGIT  SNOHOMISH  WHATCOM COUNTY  OTHER \_\_\_\_\_

IN RE DETENTION OF: \_\_\_\_\_ NO. \_\_\_\_\_

RESPONDENT: \_\_\_\_\_ PETITION FOR INITIAL DETENTION

DOB: \_\_\_\_\_

RCW 71.05  
 RCW 71.34

Pursuant to RCW  Chapter 71.05  Chapter 71.34, Petitioner, a Designated Mental Health Professional so designated by

ISLAND COUNTY  SAN JUAN COUNTY  
 SKAGIT COUNTY  SNOHOMISH COUNTY  
 WHATCOM COUNTY

Alleges under penalty of perjury that the respondent; as the result of a mental disorder:

Presents an imminent likelihood of serious harm:

to self  to others  to property

is in imminent danger because of being gravely disabled

The Respondent was brought to my attention under the following circumstances:

*I was called to Skagit Valley Hospital's Emergency Department to evaluate (R) who was transported to the ER by her mother, Elizabeth "Lee" Baker (R) who reports concerns about (R)'s psychotic thought process / content / about the dangerous behaviors (R) has recently had (coming down from apartment perches of domestic nature / without clothes). Please see attached three page statement by (R)'s mother as well as two page ER Social Worker statement for additional information.*

Petition for Initial Detention - 9/27/2011

1 of 12 pages



# Recovering

- My twin sister became my caregiver.
- I got a new prescriber who handled my medication correctly.
- I became involved in the community.
- I regained independence.

# Caregiving

- Everyday tasks - transportation to appointments, assistance with errands, reminders to take care of hygiene
- Companionship
- Safety
- Peer support





Recovery Café  
*Skagit*



# Community Support

- Recovery Cafe, Clubhouse, etc.
- Recovery services
  - DSHS
  - Housing
  - DVSAS
  - Food, clothing, showers, laundry
  - WRAP plans
- Stability, safety, recovery tools



# My Takeaway

- Was that necessary?
- What good came out of it?
- What could have been better?
- Could it have been prevented?
- How can it be avoided?
- What are some alternatives?



# KAREN SCHILDE

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Karen Schilde serves on the boards for National Alliance for Mental Illness (NAMI) Sno-Isle and Everett Clubhouse (under Hero House Northwest); facilitates NAMI family support groups; and trains state teachers for NAMI's Family-to-Family program. She volunteers with the UW SPIRIT Center as a Psychosis REACH Family Ambassador and Family Bridger.







How can courts and  
hospitals improve?



# ROADMAP TO MENTAL HEALTH

Navigating the System in Puget Sound



 **NAMI** Seattle  
National Alliance on Mental Illness

# NAVIGATING a mental health CRISIS

A NAMI resource guide for those experiencing  
a mental health emergency

 **NAMI**  
National Alliance on Mental Illness



## Criminal Justice

Advocating for an Adult  
with a Mental Illness

**A**  
ADULTS

 **NAMI**  
National Alliance on Mental Illness  
**MINNESOTA**

Phone: 612.645.2348  
Toll Free: 1.888.NAM.HELPS  
[www.namihelps.org](http://www.namihelps.org)







# Support for families of people living with psychosis

Wish you could talk to someone who understands?

Connect with a Family Bridger - they have experience caring for a loved one with psychosis and have been trained to provide **FREE** support and resources to people like you.

The Family Bridger Program is a **research study** to improve this program including compensation up to \$130 for completion of all surveys and interviews

## Want to Learn More?



Reach out in any of these ways:

Scan the QR Code

Email

[FAMILYBRIDGER@UW.EDU](mailto:FAMILYBRIDGER@UW.EDU)

Call

[206-677-4029](tel:206-677-4029)



# How is ITA being applied?

Three-quarters of the people with 3 prior ITA's return again within 3 years in King County (2022).





- 7% of King County residents are Black, but Black residents account for 15% of ITAs.
- 1% are unhoused, but civil committees are more likely to experience housing instability.



In 2022, King County facilities denied treatment to 25% of people seeking care for a behavioral health crisis.

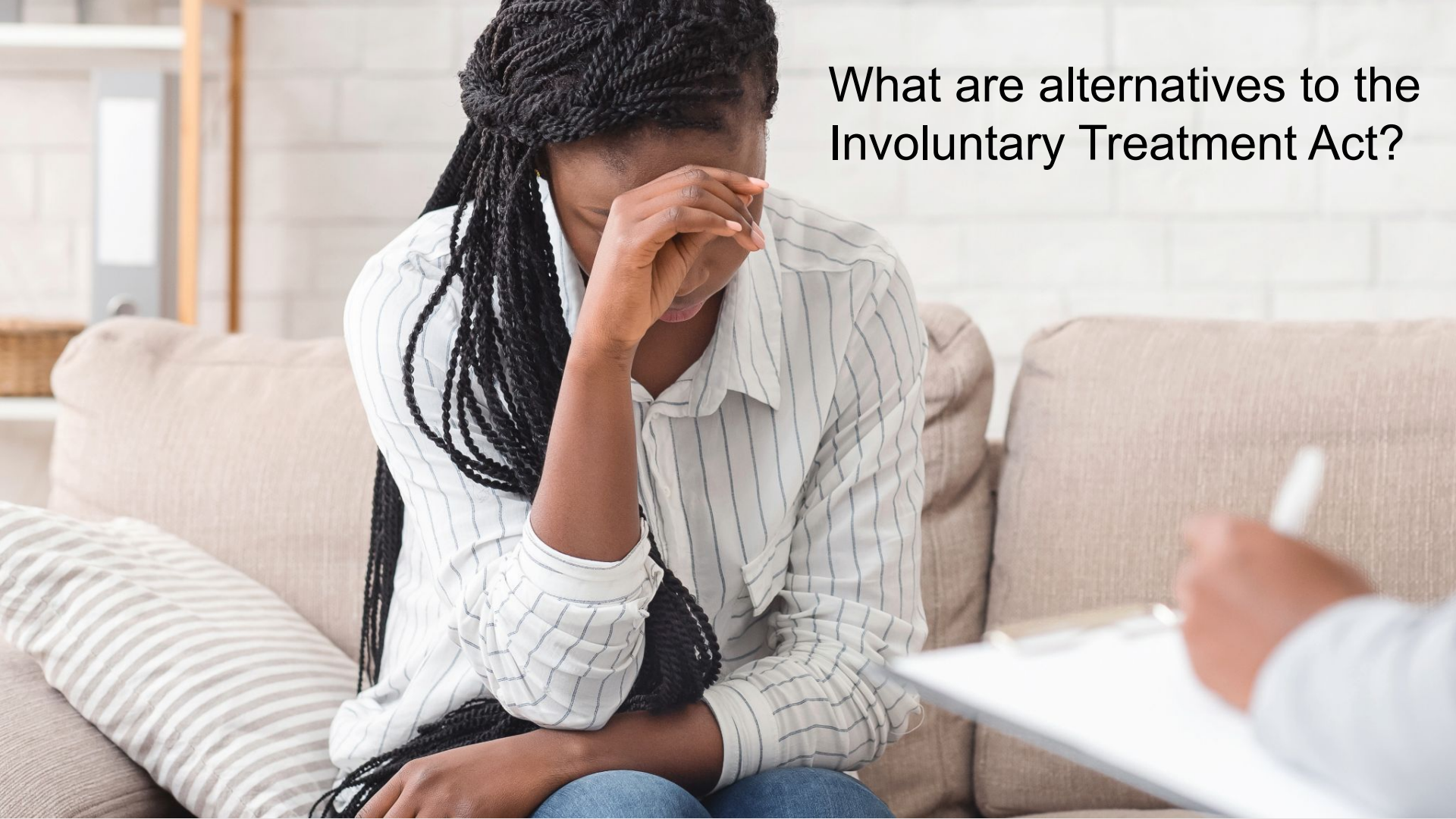


<https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/mental-health/king-county-mental-health-facilities-still-reject-a-quarter-of-patients-report-shows/>



# Lost Patients



A woman with long black braids is sitting on a light-colored couch, covering her face with her hand in a gesture of distress or crying. She is wearing a white and blue vertically striped button-down shirt. In the foreground, the hand of another person is visible, holding a white marker and writing on a clipboard. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

What are alternatives to the  
Involuntary Treatment Act?





CASH

Crisis

Helping Out

TS

ance



211004

2500





ADAI Symposium

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# **Cannabis, Schizophrenia, and Other Psychotic Disorders:**

*Moving Away from Reefer Madness  
Toward Science*



<https://adai.uw.edu/cerp/symposium-2024/>



*Creating a new path*



*NEW*

*Journeys*



# Open Dialogue





What We Do ▾ | Who We Are | Support for Psychosis ▾ | Research | Implementation | Training | Events | News | Give | Contact Us 



# Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Psychosis (CBTp)

<https://uwspiritcenter.org/cognitive-behavioral-therapy-for-psychosis-cbtp/>

# ARE YOU CARING FOR SOMEONE WITH PSYCHOSIS?

*Join us for Psychosis REACH: Recovery by Enabling Adult Carers at Home*

**This virtual training in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)  
will teach caregivers to:**

- ✓ Use evidence-based coping strategies
- ✓ Develop key caring principles
- ✓ Communicate effectively with your loved one
- ✓ Make sense of medications and treatment
- ✓ Implement relapse prevention strategies



Psychosis REACH consists of an online course, which you will complete at your own pace, followed by a live virtual training led by the co-developers of Psychosis REACH. Following the training, you will have the option to connect with a Psychosis REACH Family Ambassador, which is a family member with lived experience previously trained in the Psychosis REACH model.

***Psychosis REACH trainings have been scheduled through 2025!***  
***Check out at [www.psychosisreach.org](http://www.psychosisreach.org)***

<https://www.psychosisreach.org/>



# HEALING

OUR PATH FROM  
MENTAL ILLNESS TO  
MENTAL HEALTH

THOMAS INSEL, MD





**Everett**  
CLUBHOUSE  
A program of HERO House NW

WHAT'S UP  
Everett Clubhouse

Everett  
What is Childbearing?  
A Guide for New Moms and Support Systems  
What are Birthdays Like?







THREE RIVERS  
THERAPY  
PEER RESPITE

<https://3riverstherapy.com/>







# LAURA VAN TOSH

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Laura Van Tosh's work is born from her experience as a patient turned activist, and she has been involved with the peer movement since 1985. She is the founder of the Mental Health Policy Roundtable, which brings newcomers and veterans of policy together in a neutral environment of learning. Laura has written extensively about peer-operated behavioral health care services and homelessness and has worked inside three state psychiatric hospitals. She is a member of the Behavioral Health Joint Legislative and Executive Committee, which is developing a five-year strategic plan for the behavioral health care system in Washington state, and serves as a consultant with Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute.



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# AN ACADEMIC-STATE-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP TO CREATE A CBT CONTINUUM OF CARE FOR INVOLUNTARY COMMITTEES IN WASHINGTON STATE

March 4, 2025, 12:00–1:00 p.m. PT

**Sarah Kopelovich, PhD, ABPP**

This presentation will describe a Washington state-funded effort to prioritize cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) delivery to individuals on a 90- or 180-day civil commitment and to shore up CBT care continuity across levels of care.

**Learn more and get Zoom link:** [bit.ly/cmhpl](https://bit.ly/cmhpl)



# FEEDBACK

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Post-event surveys are critical, and your feedback helps us to improve and develop future events.



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