

Support a Statewide Alternative Transportation System for Children and Adults in Mental Health Crisis

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| \$10.2 million GF/year: Items #311 #1s (Hanger), 303 #4s (Dunnavant) & 311 #2h (Watts) | \$1.7 million GF/year: Item 311 #3h (Garrett) |
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- In Virginia, children and adults experiencing a mental health crisis are often transported to a mental health facility by law enforcement under a temporary detention order (TDO). During transport, children are frequently handcuffed and sometimes shackled in the back of a police car. This criminalization of children's crises often results in traumatization, stigmatization, and can compromise treatment.
- This process also puts under-appreciated stresses on law enforcement throughout the state, particularly those in rural areas. The time required to serve and transport individuals with Temporary Detention Orders (TDO) can consume many hours—taking law enforcement away from their primary community law enforcement duties.
- A recent alternative transportation pilot project in Southwest Virginia demonstrated that adults in mental health crisis can be safely transported to the hospital without the use of law enforcement. This pilot produced positive patient outcome and provided relief to law enforcement.

Endorsed by law enforcement and the SJ47 Joint Subcommittee, please support a budget package that builds on the success of the Southwest Virginia pilot and includes funding to develop and implement a statewide, recovery-focused alternative transportation system for individuals under a TDO.

Case Examples:

In just the last year, LAJC represented two different children in unrelated cases, ages 7 and 9, who experienced shackling and law enforcement transport as part of an involuntary mental health process.

- In one case, our client was a 7-year-old boy in the foster care system who experienced a mental health crisis that led to an involuntary detention. Though he had calmed down with the help of his social worker, an officer had to handcuff him and transport him via police car to a medical facility. This child's only other experiences with police were witnessing his father's arrest, and his own foster care removal from his home.
- In a second case, our 9-year-old client experienced a mental health crisis during an outpatient health appointment. He then spent nine hours in a hospital emergency room during the emergency custody process, only to be woken up late in the evening by deputies who shackled his hands and legs, and placed him in a police transport vehicle where he remained 4-point shackled until his arrival at a hospital 70 miles away.