

Gavin Newsom ballyhooed care first \$236 million mental health push helps ONLY 22 people in four years

By [DANA KENNEDY, SENIOR INVESTIGATIVE REPORTER](#)

When **Gavin Newsom** launched CARE Court with great fanfare, he promised help for people with severe mental illness who go back and forth between **homelessness**, jail, and emergency rooms.

The **California** Governor boasted that CARE Court would be a 'completely new paradigm' that would compassionately force people's mentally ill loved ones off the streets and into treatment via a judge's order – and estimated that up to 12,000 people could be helped.

A State Assembly analysis said up to 50,000 people might be eligible.

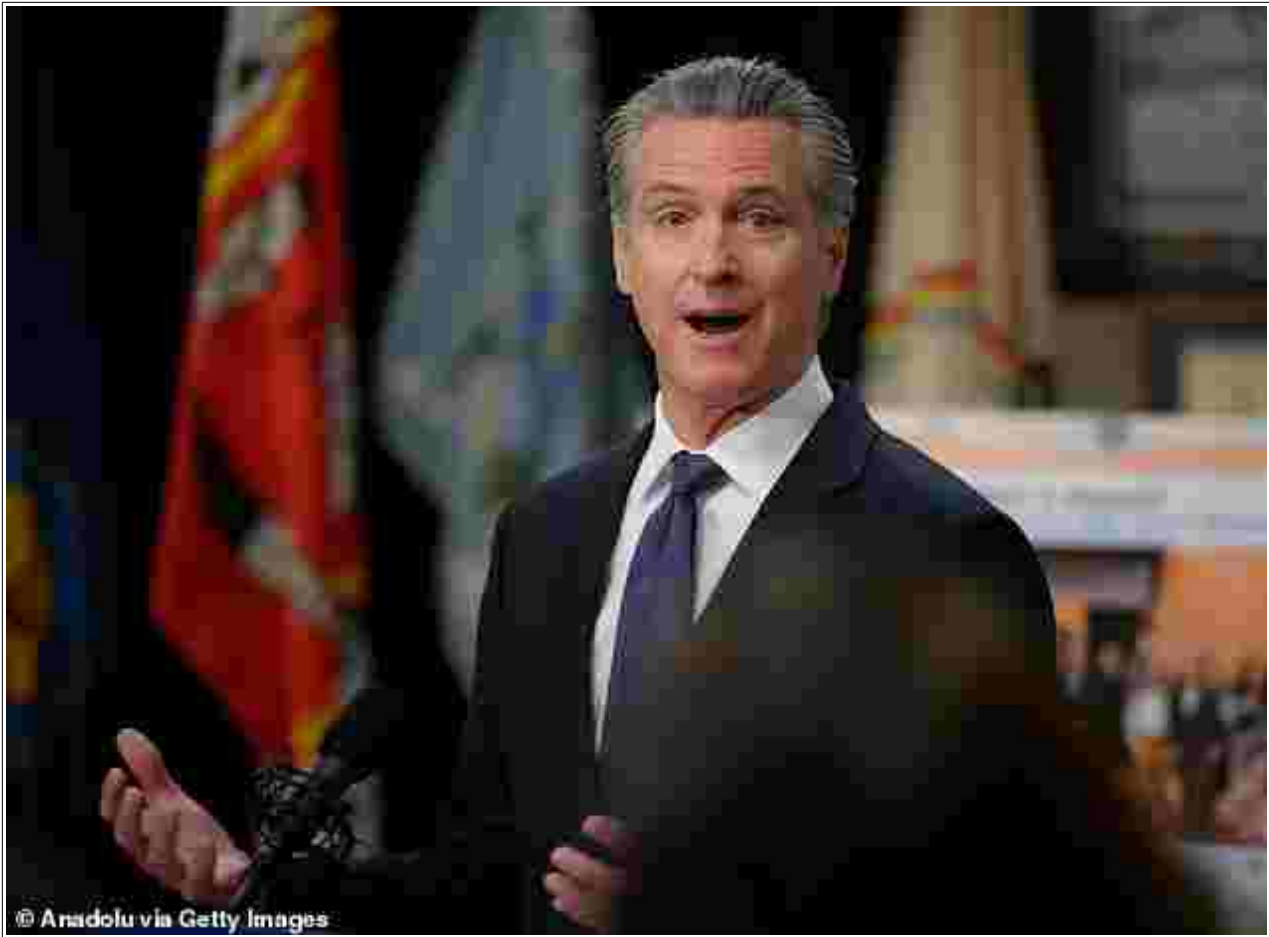
However after spending \$236 million in taxpayer dollars on CARE Court since the March 2022 announcement, the Daily Mail can reveal that the program has flopped, with some critics even saying it's fraud.

Only 22 people have been court-ordered into treatment so far.

Out of roughly 3000 petitions filed by October statewide, 706 were approved but of those, 684 were voluntary agreements that were never the intended point of the program.

When the plan was first announced, Ronda Deplazes, 62, and her husband, who had often been prisoners in their home in Concord since their son's schizophrenia diagnosis 20 years ago, CARE Court looked finally to be a solution to her entire family's heartbreak.

Her son developed schizophrenia in his late teens, she said. At first, the family believed his struggles were primarily addiction-related.



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Governor Gavin Newsom launched CARE Court in 2022 with claims it would help thousands of severely mentally ill Californians - so far, just 22 have been court-ordered into treatment



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The state's homeless population has hovered near 180,000 in recent years, with up to 60 percent believed to suffer from serious mental illness

Like many families in California, they believed CARE Court would finally allow a judge to order treatment for someone too sick to recognize they needed help.

California's homeless population has hovered between 170,000 and 180,000 in recent years.

Between 30 and 60 percent of them are thought to have serious mental illness and many of those have substance abuse issues, according to both state and federal data.

Celebrity parents like the late Rob and Michele Reiner, allegedly murdered by their long-troubled son Nick, or the parents of former Nickelodeon child star Tylor Chase, who has been living on the streets of Riverside and resisting efforts to help him, faced the same often insurmountable challenges as Deplazes and other families when trying to rescue and aid their children.

For the past 60 years, ever since the passage of the bipartisan Lanterman-Petris-Short Act, which was signed into law by then-Governor Ronald Reagan and led to the end of involuntary confinement in state mental hospitals – lawmakers and mental health advocates have struggled to find solutions for the chronically mentally ill in the state.

But when Deplazes heard Newsom talk about CARE court, she felt he understood what she and other parents of mentally ill offspring go through.

'I've got four kids,' Newsom said at the time. 'I can't imagine how hard this is. It breaks your heart.'

'I mean, your life just torn asunder because you're desperately trying to reach someone you love and you watch them suffer and you watch a system that consistently lets you down and lets them down.'



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Ronda Deplazes, 62, believed CARE Court would finally force life-saving treatment for her schizophrenic son after decades of crisis – instead, a judge rejected her petition.



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Many unhoused Californians with severe mental illness remain on the streets, even as the state pours billions into homelessness and treatment initiatives; pictured above is a homeless encampment in downtown LA

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Deplazes estimates that her son has been jailed roughly 200 times, mostly for misdemeanors.

But after petitioning CARE court, a red tape-filled process that Deplazes was familiar with after years of trying to navigate the state's bloated, multi-billion dollar labyrinth of other programs for the homeless and mentally ill, a judge turned her down.

'He said, "his needs are higher than we provide for", Deplazes recalled.

'He said this even though the CARE court program specifically says if your loved one is jailed all the time, that's a reason to petition. That's a lie.

'They did nothing to help us. There was no direction. No place to go. They wouldn't tell us where to get that higher level of care.'

The emotional toll, she said, was horrific.

'I was devastated. Completely out of hope,' Deplazes said.

'It felt like just another round of hope and defeat.'



Deplazes, who keeps in touch with a network of similarly-stressed mothers of mentally ill children, alleges CARE Court has become a revenue-generating system that keeps cases open without delivering care.

California has spent between \$24 and \$37 billion on the homelessness problem since Governor Newsom took office in 2019 with dubious results although the governor's office frequently cites recent preliminary stats from 2025 **showing a nine percent decrease in what is called unsheltered homelessness.**

'There are all these teams, public defenders, administrators, care teams, judges, bailiffs, sitting in court every week,' Deplazes said.



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A homeless man sleeps on a sidewalk with his dog Alo in San Francisco



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A California flag is draped across a homeless encampment along Interstate 5 in Chula Vista

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Dalton agrees with Deplazes that enormous amounts of money are being poured into CARE Court despite its low success rate.

'The people who are supposed to be helping are in fact profiting from the situation,' Dalton said.

'It's like a diet company not really wanting you to lose weight. It's the same business model.'



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Newsom once said CARE Court would prevent families from watching loved ones 'suffer while the system lets them down' – families now say that's exactly what's happened

Former LA County DA Steve Cooley believes fraud is embedded across numerous California government programs, arguing that lawmakers and agencies repeatedly fail to build basic prevention measures into systems that distribute billions of public dollars.

Cooley told the Daily Mail said that while public attention often focuses on prosecution after fraud occurs, the real problem lies much earlier – in the design of government programs themselves.

'Almost all government programs where there's money involved, there's going to be fraud, and there's going to be people who take advantage of it,' Cooley said.

'Where the federal government, the state government and the county government have all failed is they do not build in preventative mechanisms.'

Cooley said that the same patterns repeat across multiple sectors, from Medicare and hospice care to childcare and infrastructure and homelessness.

'They're all subject to fraud,' he said. 'And there's very little being done about it by local authorities.'

'It's almost like they don't want to see it.'

As one welfare official once told him, Cooley recalled: 'Our job isn't to detect fraud, it's to give the money out.'

Deplazes said she is very suspicious of CARE Court.

'I think there's fraud and I'm going to prove it.'

She's filed public records requests seeking information on outcomes and funding, though she said agencies have been slow or unresponsive.

'That's our money,' she said. 'They're taking it, and families are being destroyed.'

While she fears it may be too late for her own son, who is currently in jail but due to be released soon, Deplazes says she continues speaking out for others.

'We're not going to let the government just tell us, 'We're not helping you anymore,' she said. 'We're not doing it.'

Calls to Governor Newsom's office were not returned.