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NJ?s Involuntary Outpatient Commitment Law Poses Civil Liberties Issues for People with Mental Illness

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New Jersey's Involuntary Outpatient Commitment Law, enacted in 2009, grants New Jersey judges the authority to mandate mental health treatment for potentially dangerous people. In 2014, Governor Christie dedicated an additional $4.5 million to expand the program into all twenty-one counties. Previously, only six of the state's counties ? Burlington, Essex, Hudson, Ocean, Warren and Union ? had offered the controversial program, which assigns patients to intensive case management to ensure that they have housing, are seeking employment, and are receiving necessary treatment. Patients who fail to comply and are deemed by their treatment team to be a danger to themselves, to property, or to others ?in the foreseeable future? can be ordered by a judge to be committed into a psychiatric hospital until they are stable.

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