

CASES

NATHANIEL ACT

An Alternative to Incarceration (ATI) program funded by the NYC Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice that provides individuals living with serious mental illness (SMI) with Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) delivered by a team of nurses, court advocates, peer specialists, and clinical staff specializing in employment, family, housing, and substance use.

This program is for individuals with open cases in Criminal and Supreme Courts in Brooklyn and Manhattan.



Antonio entered CASES' Nathaniel Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) program in November 2019. Prior to this, Antonio was detained on Rikers Island for more than two years following an arrest for felony assault before he was connected with Nathaniel ACT through the Manhattan Mental Health Court as an alternative to incarceration.

Upon his release from Rikers, Antonio said he did not feel relief. Instead, even after returning home with his mother, he felt what he described as "trauma as a present feeling," due to both the "derailment" he experienced at Rikers related to his mental illness, and "sorrow" for those he left behind in the jail. However, as he began working with the CASES Nathaniel ACT team, he began the process of healing.

"I strongly believe that Mental Health Court and the Nathaniel ACT team are attending to trauma and giving people second chances," Antonio says. "I really think they're doing a good thing in the world."

ACT is an evidence-based model that provides comprehensive support and treatment services proven to help individuals living with serious mental illness achieve recovery and improved quality of life in their communities. ACT features mobile staff who engage with clients in their preferred community settings. Antonio's experience highlights Nathaniel ACT's multidisciplinary approach. When he experienced panic attacks following his return home, the team's psychiatric nurse practitioner was able to work with him to get him on the right medication. To help pay rent and put food on the table, he worked with the team's peer specialist to sign up for public benefits. When he needed to find a place to stay, he worked with the team's housing specialist to find an apartment.

Through his engagement in Nathaniel ACT, Antonio was able to address a variety of needs he was navigating upon returning from jail. Getting connected with the services he needed allowed Antonio to attain stability and a stronger sense of self-empowerment and to be more proactive about his treatment plan. The Nathaniel ACT team stayed by Antonio's side throughout his recovery process, supporting him and connecting him with services.

"They always looked out for me. They were a system of support," says Antonio. "The Nathaniel ACT team cares about their clients. I don't feel belittled by the fact that I have a mental illness."

Due to his successful completion of all mandated treatments and appointments, Antonio exited the Manhattan Mental Health Court program in the winter of 2021 with a reduced plea. He is still engaged with the Nathaniel ACT team while he pursues attending college and finding ways to contribute to the community.

"I'm really grateful for the mental health community that has served me, and I'm really proud to have come this far," Antonio says. "I've accomplished a lot of things, and I'm moving forward in life."