# Ricky's Law: The Debate on Involuntary Commitment for Addiction Treatment



Enrique Klausmeyer-Garcia, also known as Ricky, struggled with addiction before his death at the age of 37 in 2023. His experiences motivated the introduction of a Washington state law in 2017 called "Ricky’s Law." This legislation allows for the involuntary commitment of individuals with substance abuse disorders to treatment facilities. The law reflects broader debates about the ethics and effectiveness of forced treatment for substance use disorder.

Ricky’s struggles were heavily supported by his friend Lauren Davis and his husband Kelsey Klausmeyer. Ricky met Davis early in life; together, they battled his addiction, which included repeated hospitalizations and near-fatal incidents. Davis eventually played a pivotal role in advocating for the legislative change exemplified by Ricky’s Law after realizing the limitations in existing laws concerning involuntary commitment for addiction.

Washington was one of 14 states with commitment laws dating back to the 19th century, aimed then at “habitual drunkenness,” with mixed initiatives and results evolving throughout the 20th century. Modern proponents have argued the potential utility of these laws, especially in regions where resources and alternatives might not match the rising rates of addiction and related fatalities.

Despite the law’s implementation, practical challenges have arisen, including staffing shortages, system overload, and debates about the morality and effectiveness of involuntary treatment. Some professionals argue these resources might not reach those in the most urgent need promptly enough due to systematic delays.

The law highlights a broader issue visible across the U.S., illustrated by the increase in alcohol-related fatalities and a surge in synthetic drug use, notably fentanyl. The situation has exacerbated the public health crisis, prompting discussions on the need for a comprehensive reevaluation of addiction treatment and associated policies.

Amidst these systemic and personal challenges, Klausmeyer's life and death have generated ongoing discussions about the balance between individual rights and public health needs, as well as the pathways to effective addiction treatment and recovery.