

Opioid-Related News and the Courts

Weekly Review

March 25, 2022



National

[Funding Opportunities for Your Community in 2022: An Overview of What's Ahead](#)

Bureau of Justice Assistance

RUBY QAZILBASH [Associate Deputy Director within the Bureau of Justice Assistance]: So, the first program to tell you about is our Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Abuse Program or COSSAP. So very few communities have been spared by the effects of the opioid epidemic and other substance use disorders. Substance use and mental health are two of the most often cited challenges for jurisdictions whether large or small, urban or rural. And COSSAP supports efforts to reduce overdose deaths, promote public safety, and support access to treatment and recovery services. There are nine purpose areas that can accommodate proposals at various entry points across the criminal justice spectrum to include alternatives to incarceration, law enforcement lead to diversion, recovery and support services, and medication-assisted treatment, to name a few.

COSSAP allows you really to craft a proposal that is right for your community and [is] responsive to your community's needs. The average award amount for site-based awards is 3 million under COSSAP and [one million] for local site-based awards.

National

[2 Ways to Make Progress Against the Opioid Epidemic](#)

Governing

As the opioid epidemic rages on and the country enters its third year of the COVID-19 pandemic, states are struggling to manage these coexisting health crises that threaten to overwhelm many of the public services they provide. To meet the opioid challenge, states should increase access to [medication-assisted treatment](#) (MAT). Prescribed by primary healthcare providers, MAT uses medications, combined with counseling and therapy, to prevent overdose and reduce drug cravings. These plans are typically highly effective, but many patients with opioid use disorder do not have adequate access to healthcare providers. Sadly, 80 percent of Americans with opioid use disorder aren't receiving treatment.



Massachusetts

[New policy after allegations of disability discrimination to those in court using prescribed opioids](#)

WWLP

A new policy will be implemented in all 25 of the Massachusetts drug courts:

- Only licensed prescribers or opioid treatment programs (OTP) will make decisions regarding a participant's treatment plan, including the type of medication and dosage.
- Treatment plans will be developed by the licensed prescriber or OTP after conducting an individualized assessment for each participant.
- Drug courts and their personnel will not interfere with these individualized assessments, and will not express a preference for, or mandate, one form of MOUD over another.
- Drug courts and their personnel may only require that participants with OUD comply with the treatment recommendations of a licensed prescriber or OTP.
- Drug courts will ensure compliance with the policy, including implementing a new procedure for reviewing complaints about decisions related to MOUD, regardless of the source of the complaint.

Missouri

[‘I was at a point where I wanted to give up:’ St. Louis drug court looks to grow amid pandemic](#)

St. Louis Times-Dispatch

The two St. Louisans graduated Monday night from the St. Louis Circuit Court's drug treatment program and had their felony cases dropped as a result.

Their class of three men is among the smallest to graduate since the program started in April 1997, primarily because of the COVID-19 pandemic that has slowed the disposal of criminal cases and referrals to drug court.

Matthew Melton, drug court commissioner, said the treatment program can accept more than 300 people at a time but currently has about 70 participants.

Now that in-person restrictions on the courts have begun to wane, Melton hopes more people can take advantage of the treatment program and get clean.

Texas

[‘We have to make this a priority:’ Montgomery County Justice of the Peace Wayne Mack talks substance use crisis](#)

Community Impact Newspaper

What are the biggest struggles that substance use patients and care providers face in Montgomery County?

[Wayne Mack, Justice of the Peace for Montgomery County’s Justice Court Precinct 1]
So, I think the biggest challenge when it comes to addiction is that we don’t view addiction properly as a disease. You know, it’s monitored every day, for the rest of our lives, when we’re diagnosed with diabetes, but ... we don’t offer the same support for addiction. We tend to blame versus treating [it] as a disease, and without a change in how our society views addiction as a mental illness and as a public health issue, it’s very difficult for people that live with that.