

Opioid-Related News and the Courts

Weekly Review

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National

[Overdose Deaths May Have Topped 90,000 in 2020](#)

Washington Post

Final data won't be available until near the end of this year. But [an analysis](#) of preliminary data by the Commonwealth Fund found that shortly after the pandemic started, monthly overdose deaths spiked 50 percent to more than 9,000 deaths in May.

Based on additional estimates from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention suggesting that deaths remained elevated for much of the rest of 2020, Commonwealth researchers estimated **the year's total overdose deaths could have exceeded 90,000** — up from 70,630 in 2019. **That would be the largest single-year percentage increase in the past two decades.**

National

[Opioid abuse spiked during the pandemic. What can Congress do?](#)

Politico

What is being done? Well for one, the House Energy and Commerce Committee has announced an April 14 hearing on substance abuse during the pandemic. They'll hear from Acting Director of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy Regina LaBelle and other experts. Congress' Covid relief bills have also dedicated [billions in funds](#) for substance abuse prevention and treatment (SAMHSA), including grants for certified community behavioral health clinics. But lawmakers are also pushing for more resources and action to be taken.

[Rep. David Joyce (R-Ohio)] says he wants to see the Comprehensive Opioid Program Extension [\(COPE\) Act](#) passed, legislation he introduced that would increase the authorized funding level for the Justice Department, so that the agency has \$70 million more a year over the next five years to dedicate toward providing training and resources for first responders. Some Republicans have also argued that reopening the economy – and thus the return of more jobs – will also help, especially as vaccinations become more widespread.



Tennessee

[Rehab center pleads to court system as Tennessee report shows sizable overdose increase](#)

News Channel 9

But while we're seeing much fewer shutdowns and isolation now, rehab centers are focusing on issues pushed into this year.

“The court system was lax, particularly in terms of misdemeanors and so forth. There weren't a lot of court cases actually taking place in the court rooms, per say,” [David McNabb, President & CEO at Adult & Teen Challenge MidSouth] said.

Adult & Teen Challenge tells us it sees plenty of substance abusers with lingering probation violations, which it believes now will get more attention by the legal system.

The treatment center's message to the Courts: On first or second offenses, direct people to programs that can help – rather than deciding to put them in jail as the first option.