

# Opioid-Related Conditions and the Courts

In the News: September 18, 2020



## National

### [Rural Legal Deserts Are a Critical Health Determinant](#)

American Journal of Public Health

Of course, the absence of rural health providers proves just as consequential to the justice system. For instance, the rural per capita opioid overdose rate is 45% higher in rural than in urban areas, and treatment of chemical dependency is often delayed if a rural individual is involved in the criminal justice system and must wait for months to get a public defender. Not only does this leave an individual addicted to opioids in a high-stress situation with a greater risk of reoffense, but she or he also has a lower likelihood of treatment options in a rural region. Many rural areas do not have a certified opioid treatment program, and only 3% of physicians with waivers to prescribe buprenorphine and methadone operate in rural communities.

Other justice supports, including drug or driving while intoxicated courts, family dependency treatment courts, and mental health courts, likewise rely on healthcare professionals for diagnoses, assessments, protocol development, and education. These interprofessional courts are invaluable, and yet there are geographical differences in who benefits the most from them. The effectiveness of rural drug courts arguably lags behind urban courts, which may provide more culturally specific services, have larger program budgets, and are more likely to offer adjunct health, mental health, and social services.

## National

### [Making guitars saved a man from opioid addiction. Now others are getting the same help](#)

CNN

Moore's success inspired the creation of the "Culture of Recovery" arts program at The Appalachian Artisan Center. The non-profit already had pottery, luthiery, and blacksmithing studios, and in 2018, with a grant from ArtPlace America, started inviting people in recovery into their studios to work with mentors.

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The program is voluntary and invites people who are enrolled in local drug rehabilitation programs like the Hickory Hill Recovery Center and Drug Court, which uses a non-punitive approach to recovery.

"There are creative individuals that this just fits like a hand in a glove," said Kimberley Childers, Circuit Court Judge for Knott County, whose own family members have struggled with opioid addiction.

“The recidivism rate is very low when a person goes through this program – I would consider it to be 10% or less,” she said.

The judge said the program speaks to the soul of the people in a region that has a strong tradition of craftsmanship.

“Our culture is so rich in these things. We’re using what we have.”

### Georgia

[Mercer team nets \\$1 million grant to fight opioid abuse in Polk, Gordon, Fannin and Gilmer counties](#)

Northwest Georgia News

“North Georgia OPEN is a community-driven initiative in one of the regions of Georgia most impacted by the opioid epidemic,” [Mercer University professor Dr. Bryant Smalley] said in a release from Mercer News. “We are honored to work with all of these partners, from the local pharmacy to the judicial system, to collaboratively tackle this issue.”

The nine-member consortium is coordinated by the Center. It also includes Highland Rivers Health, Polk County Sheriff’s Office, Gordon County Emergency Management, Gilmer County Probate Court, Appalachian Circuit Drug Court, Huff’s Drug Store and Blue Ridge Pharmacy, Northwest Georgia WorkSource Georgia, and Mountain Education Charter High School.

### Michigan

[Is it enough?](#)

Hillsdale Daily News

The drug epidemic is affecting families across the nation.

Mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, friends and colleagues are often left clueless how to help their loved ones struggling with addiction as they spiral downwards seeking to further bury underlying traumas in their next high.

Programs such as the District Court’s Substance Abuse Court and the Michigan State Police Angel Program aim to help addicts.

### New York

[State court administration opposes bill to reduce number of City Court judges in Watertown, urges Cuomo to veto](#)

Watertown Daily Times

“It’s all a matter of being able to afford it,” [Mayor Jeffrey M. Smith] said. “The city of Watertown taxpayers can’t afford his wishes.”

The mayor also pointed out that the legislation received bipartisan support in the state Senate and Assembly.

The second courtroom has been a bone of contention for Mayor Smith and the City Council, who contend that it’s not needed. Stopping the project and reducing the number of City Court judges was a campaign issue for Mayor Smith last fall.

But the second full-time judge is needed for an increase in usage by adding a special drug and opioid court and plans for creating a new veterans’ court, Mr. Bloustein [legislative counsel for the state Office of Court Administration] wrote.