

# Opioid-Related News and the Courts

## Weekly Review

November 13, 2020



### Kentucky

[New Juvenile Treatment Court to help address mental health concerns in Fayette Co.](#)

WKYT

“It’s not normal for a kid that is 14 or 15 years old to have lost at least five close friends or relatives to violence or overdose of drugs,” said Logan Avritt [who works with at-risk youth in Fayette Co].

Jocko [17-year-old mentored by Avritt] says he’s on a good path now. When asked what he thought about mental health services being available to teens and if he would take the help, he replied, “I mean if I’m getting help, I’m getting help, so yeah.”

To those behind this new juvenile treatment court, his answer is one they hope to hear.

It’s about breaking the stigma on getting help and in turn breaking a cycle that could change a life. It’s something these judges agree can’t wait any longer.

“If we could just get them to talk to somebody, if we could just get them to say hey it’s okay your mental health matters because you matter,” said [Judge Melissa] Murphy.

The judges say they anticipate launching the new juvenile treatment court in early spring of 2021.

### Maryland

[Addiction treatment centers in Maryland struggle in pandemic](#)

Washington Post

Dale Klatzker, Gaudenzia CEO, is bracing for a \$3.4 million loss in revenue driven by the fall of in treatment referrals for incarcerated patients while the courts were closed.

Gaudenzia is the largest treatment provider of a state-subsidized program for inmates struggling with addiction. As part of the “8-507” program, residents who complete the treatment can receive reduced jail sentences.

Gaudenzia runs six treatment facilities with 200 beds between Anne Arundel County and Baltimore. [The program] served around 120 patients per day in 2019. That rate dropped by 75% to about 30 people per day in September. Since court proceedings have resumed, patient volumes have increased slightly.

### North Carolina

#### [How pandemic isolation changes sobriety](#)

University of North Carolina – Asheville

Gabriela Volkomer, program coordinator for the Family Drug Treatment Court, said the lack of rehab centers is affecting both the community and those in recovery.

“We need more treatment centers,” said Volkomer, 41. “If you want to send somebody to inpatient treatment, the wait time is like three weeks and they give priority to pregnant women or IV users.”

Fentanyl remains the most dangerous among users due to the substance still being relatively new for users, according to Volkomer.

“This pandemic has affected people in different ways,” Volkomer said. “Everyone deals with stress and situations differently. Obviously, some coping skills are more dangerous than others.”

### Ohio

#### [Project ECHO Connects Judges, Medical Pros in Opioid Fight](#)

Court News Ohio

The Regional Judicial Opioid Initiative – eight states including Ohio fighting the opioid crisis together – is rolling out Project ECHO.

The Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes (ECHO) is connecting medical experts with judges so that decisions from the bench will better reflect the science of drug addiction, especially the effects of opioid abuse on the brains of offenders.

Project ECHO will employ remote roundtable discussions involving doctors, medical researchers and other health professionals via remote technology.

Each RJOI state will have its own group of participating judges. In Ohio, 10 judges signed up for the training that began November 4, and the sessions run through January, via Zoom.

Ohio Supreme Court Chief Justice Maureen O’Connor has selected Mahoning County Common Pleas Court Judge John M. Durkin to serve as a panelist.

“The state of Ohio’s judiciary, particularly Chief Justice O’Connor, have been at the forefront of addressing the opioid epidemic,” Judge Durkin said.

“The Regional Judicial Opioid Initiative (RJOI) is a prime example of the benefits that can be achieved when key stakeholders are brought together, and Project ECHO is a big next step,” he said.

Topics will include:

- Opioid use disorder and medication
- Evidence-based screening and assessment for opioid disorders

- Evidence-based outcomes and research focused on criminal justice populations and medications for opioid use disorder
- Abuse of multiple drugs and alcohol and the management of relapses
- Medication for Opioid Use Disorders (MOUD) treatment to improve long-term recovery
- Improving long-term recovery from opioid abuse in special populations, including pregnant women, adolescents, and post-surgery patients

RJOI was convened by Chief Justice O'Connor in 2016. The member states are Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, North Carolina, Tennessee, and West Virginia.

### Tennessee

#### [Campaign Seeks to Educate Teens on Dangers of Fentanyl](#)

##### Tennessee Courts

The danger of fentanyl and other deadly opioids is something about which Rutherford County Juvenile Court Judge Donna Scott Davenport is well aware. According to the TBI's 2020 Prominent Drugs Heatmap, Rutherford County has had the highest number of crime lab samples test positive for fentanyl so far this year.

While Judge Davenport said that marijuana is still the drug of choice for juveniles she sees in delinquent cases, parental opioid use has played a large role in many of her dependency and neglect cases.

"The addiction is just so huge," she said. "We can go a little while without food or water, but what we're seeing is these parents absolutely cannot go without having their opiates."