

# Opioid-Related Conditions and the Courts

In the News: July 9, 2020



## New Jersey

### [Overdose Deaths Rise as Pandemic Continues](#)

Cape May Herald

New Jersey Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli expressed concern June 22 that the long battle with the COVID-19 pandemic may be worsening, what she called, the overdose epidemic. Persichilli said that state overdose deaths were 20% higher this year than at a similar period in 2019.

“We do not want to see this trend continue,” Persichilli said, as she announced a grant program for local health departments to “study patterns of overdose in their communities.”

Persichilli said the state saw 1,339 suspected overdose deaths so far this year, and that contributing factors in the rise may be the “social isolation, grief, and job loss” that accompanied the restrictions on social interaction imposed to fight the novel coronavirus.

## Rhode Island

### [RI data shows uptick in fatal drug overdoses in first quarter of 2020](#)

WPRI

Corinna Roy, the director of Behavioral Healthcare at RI Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities, and Hospitals (BHDDH), says prior to COVID-19, Rhode Islanders were not really utilizing telehealth, but it has proved to have numerous benefits including the removal of barriers like poor access to transportation or being unable to leave home due to child or elder care responsibilities.

She also noted that telehealth has been extremely successful for those who are disengaged and says the ease of the service has provided a dramatic reduction in “no-shows” as well as increased compliance for those with court orders.

## Virginia

### [Rappahannock Veterans Docket helps man break cycle of pain, pills and charges](#)

Free Lance-Star

[Brian Burton] turned to opioids to treat his problems when pills were easy to come by 10 years ago. He developed a methamphetamine habit. He overdosed.

Burton had done about six months of jail time when his lawyer got him into the veterans program. He knew things were serious. He signed the contract, stating he would meet the expected requirements or he would be looking at more than five years in prison if he went back on his word.