

Opioid-Related Conditions and the Courts

In the News: September 25, 2020



Florida

[OSCA 2020 Virtual Training Workshops](#)

Office of the State Courts Administrator – Florida Courts Opioid Initiative

Week 1: August 7, 2020 Engaging Participants in the Recovery

Week 2: August 14, 2020 The Science of OUD, MAT & Trauma

Week 3: August 21, 2020 Behavioral Interventions & Relapse Prevention; Special Considerations for Pregnancy

Week 4: August 28, 2020 Practical Implications for the Courts

Week 5: September 11, 2020 Faces Behind the Cases in Daily Practice & Strategies for Engaging Participants

September 18, 2020 Trends in Opioid and Stimulant Use in the United States; Potential Impact in Treatment Policy; Considerations for Courts

September 25, 2020 Ethics & the Law: Considerations for Problem Solving, Dependency, Drug Courts

Illinois

[Illinois Judges Taking Part in Educational Program to Address Opioid Epidemic](#)

Supreme Court of Illinois

Project ECHO, an Appalachian/Midwest Regional Judicial Opioid Initiative (RJOI) program, has officially kicked off in Illinois. Project ECHO provides education on issues including the physiology of addiction, evidence-based programming interventions, and medication assisted treatment to Illinois judges to help them address opioid abuse in criminal and family court cases.

The Project ECHO pilot consists of seven one-hour Zoom calls in which two doctors from the University of Chicago engage 15 judges from across Illinois in a weekly session. In the first 40 minutes of each session, the medical experts present information about opioids, addiction, evidence-based programs and medication for opioid use disorder and answer questions from the participating judges. The remaining 20 minutes centers around group discussion of how opioids impact individuals the judges encounter daily in their courtrooms and developing strategies to assist and manage these situations.

“The opioid epidemic has had a profound effect on our communities and judicial system,” Chief Justice Anne M. Burke said. “The Illinois Courts continue to be proactive in addressing this issue through collaborative programs like Project ECHO.”

Indiana**[Drug addiction biggest issue in race to become Superior Court 4 judge](#)**

WLFI

Two candidates vying to become judge of Superior Court 4 differ in their approach to dealing with drug addiction in the community.

The court sees a majority of the county's low-level felony drug cases, as well as evictions and small claims.

"I consider it to be sort of the front line on our community's war on opioids, meth, and synthetic drugs," says Matt Sandy (R-candidate for Superior Court 4 judge).

Michigan**[Michigan Judges to Take Part in Regional Opioid Education Program](#)**

Michigan Courts

Eleven judges from Michigan will be taking part in a new program called "Project ECHO" to help them better address opioid abuse in criminal and family court cases. An initiative of the Appalachian/Midwest Regional Judicial Opioid Initiative (RJOI), Project ECHO (Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes) provides education on issues including the physiology of addiction, evidence-based programming interventions, and medication-assisted treatment.

"Local judges are community leaders who are uniquely positioned to make a difference on the front lines of the opioid epidemic," said Michigan Supreme Court Chief Justice Bridget M. McCormack, who serves on the RJOI Leadership Committee. "Judges see case after case involving people struggling with drug abuse, and Project ECHO will help them better understand ways to address addiction and strengthen their engagement with the community."

Originally developed for health care professionals, the [Project ECHO](#) model has expanded to help address needs in many other areas, including the judiciary.

Michigan**[Sterling Heights Judge Lepore to participate in program on opioid addiction, treatment](#)**

Macomb Daily

Judge Annemarie Lepore of 41A District Court will participate in Project ECHO (Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes), which provides education on issues including the physiology of addiction, evidence-based programming interventions, and medication-assisted treatment, according to a Michigan Courts news release.

It is an initiative of RJOI (Appalachian/Midwest Regional Judicial Opioid Initiative), on which state Supreme Court Chief Justice Bridget McCormack sits on the Leadership Committee, officials said.

New Jersey**[\\$300K In Grants to Help Camden County Battle Opioid Addiction](#)**

Patch.com

Other initiatives Camden County has in place to combat the opioid epidemic include Project SAVE, an early intervention program at the municipal court level; putting naloxone in the hands of all first responders; and working with medical providers to limit opioid prescriptions have played a vital role in curbing the public health crisis.

The county also has a Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) program to combat opioid abuse among prisoners in the county's jail.

New York**[How the Pandemic Has Changed the Fight Against Opioid Addiction](#)**

The River Newsroom

[Delaware County Sheriff Craig DuMond] also believes law enforcement and drug courts can help keep people suffering with addiction accountable during the recovery process by creating a captive audience.

“It’s weird to say, but I’ve had a number of people who’ve lost family members and friends to the opioid epidemic and said, ‘We only wish they were arrested sooner so they could’ve been mandated the help that they need. Maybe it would’ve saved their lives,’” DuMond says.

North Carolina**[Overdoses aren’t slowing during the pandemic](#)**

JDNews.com

Courthouses in the area are also taking steps to protect those dealing with legal matters. Beth Heath, Chief District Court Judge for the 8th Judicial District, said many of her drug court sessions are now remote or virtual. Heath serves Wayne Lenoir and Greene counties and said some sessions are staggered at different times to limit the number of people. They have also upped their cleaning efforts to comply with state guidelines.

“We’re continuing to do what we have to do,” Heath said.

One challenge for families in drug court, especially in rural areas like Lenoir County, is internet access.

“Families might not have access to the internet or a smartphone – and if they do, they might not have internet or data on it,” Heath said.

Heath’s Family Drug Treatment Court deals with referrals from abuse, neglect and dependency cases where parents have lost custody of their children due to substance abuse. Previously a state-funded program, drug programs help parents seek the help they need and reconnect with their families. In 2011, the state eliminated that funding and Heath [has] been working on securing grant funding to keep the drug court running.

“Drug courts work,” Heath said. “In the long run, they save money on many levels in their communities ... but it’s very difficult to fund them.”

Currently, she submitted two federal grants to make improvements to the drug court operations and is hoping to secure grant funding for a program to provide housing for mothers and children as well as transportation and assistance to get substance abuse treatment.

While Heath said it is too early to determine the connection between COVID-19 and overdose, she said reports of abuse and neglect are increasing, and she expects to see those numbers impact referrals for drug court.

Ohio

[Chief Justice Discusses Judicial Elections, Courts in Toledo Address](#)

Courtnews Ohio

Chief Justice O’Connor also explained to the business leaders how Ohio has led a coordinated eight-state response to the opioid crisis by bringing together leaders from government branches, the medical and treatment communities, law enforcement and academia.

“I thought we should break down the barriers of political borders,” she said in describing the Regional Judicial Opioid Initiative, which begins its fifth year this month.

Oklahoma

[‘Killing Pain’: Documentary series wins regional Emmy Awards for chronicling Oklahoma’s opioid crisis](#)

The Oklahoman

The co-directors envisioned “Killing Pain” as a free, episodic series that would delve into different aspects of the crisis — from the brain changes caused by addiction to the effectiveness of drug courts — in short installments. The first season launched online in summer 2018 with a prologue and six episodes.

Oklahoma

[The unexpected consequences of COVID-19](#)

The Journal Record

All of the panelists urged lawmakers and other decision makers to prioritize funding for medically assisted opioid addiction treatment and other mental health and substance abuse services. All too often in the past, Oklahomans who have struggled with addiction have gotten into trouble with the law and simply been incarcerated, [Mental Health Association of Oklahoma Chief Executive Terri White] said. That’s resulted in a lot of expenses for the state and hasn’t really solved anything. While it costs about \$19,000 on average to keep an individual incarcerated for a year, she said it costs about \$5,000 to channel a person through drug court and potentially put an end to their abuse and addiction.

“Drug court is far more effective at actually treating the root cause of addiction,” she said.