

Opioid-Related News and the Courts

Weekly Review

October 23, 2020



National

[Purdue Pharma Pleads Guilty to Criminal Charges for Opioid Sales](#)

New York Times

Purdue Pharma, the maker of OxyContin, has agreed to plead guilty to criminal charges related to its marketing of the addictive painkiller and faces penalties of roughly \$8.3 billion, the Justice Department announced on Wednesday. The settlement could pave the way for a resolution of thousands of lawsuits brought against the company for its role in a public health crisis that has killed more than 450,000 Americans since 1999.

The company's owners, members of the wealthy Sackler family, have agreed to pay \$225 million in civil penalties. Prosecutors said the agreement did not preclude the filing of criminal charges against Purdue executives or individual Sacklers.

The federal settlement does not end all of the extensive litigation against Purdue, but it does represent a significant advance in the long legal march by states, tribes, cities and counties to hold the most prominent opioid maker accountable.

In a statement issued after the announcement of the deal, Steve Miller, chairman of the company board, said: "Purdue deeply regrets and accepts responsibility for the misconduct detailed by the Department of Justice in the agreed statement of facts."

National

[Drug Treatment Court Opioid Overdose Prevention \(video\)](#)

SAMSHA

This webinar provides a framework of critical activities, policies, and practices for those involved in drug treatment courts who are at high risk of an opioid overdose. Learn more about SAMHSA's GAINS Center at <https://www.samhsa.gov/gains-center>.

National

[Fentanyl and Heroin Misuse Skyrockets During COVID-19 Pandemic, Finds Quest Diagnostics Health Trends Study](#)

Quest Diagnostics

A new Quest Diagnostics Health Trends study indicates that misuse of fentanyl, heroin, and nonprescribed opioids are on the rise, potentially due to the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on healthcare access and support for individuals most at risk for substance use disorder. The full study from researchers at Quest Diagnostics (NYSE: DGX) and published online in the peer reviewed journal Population Health Management, can be found [here](#).

Based on analysis of more than 872,000 de-identified lab results representative of all 50 states and the District of Columbia, the study is believed to be the largest to examine drug positivity rates before and during the first several months of the pandemic, and the first to examine drug combining patterns based on lab data on a national scale.

Maryland

[‘New way of life:’ Harford County Circuit Court’s Adult Drug Court has its first three graduates](#)

Baltimore Sun

[Circuit Court Judge Kevin J. Mahoney] praised drug court staff who have worked through the shift from in-person to virtual program meetings and “soldiered on ... calling and encouraging the participants to get to this day.”

Courts in Harford County, as well as those throughout Maryland, [reopened for jury trials in early October](#), although multiple measures are in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in Circuit and District Court facilities, such as mask-wearing and social distancing requirements.

“As I’m sure you can all appreciate, this has been an incredible challenge, and that is why I am most proud of the three graduates who sit before you today,” Mahoney told those gathered for the ceremony.

New York

[Rome judge to head new opioid intervention court](#)

Rome Sentinel

Oneida County is getting a special intervention court to help get more and quicker treatment for people addicted to opioids, state court officials announced.

The Office of Court Administration has established the Oneida County HOPE Intervention Court, for “Healing, Opportunity, Prevention and Education,” Fifth Judicial District Administrative Judge James Murphy announced Thursday.

The court is like drug courts, which were established more than 20 years ago in which eligible defendants receive addiction treatment and counseling in return for reduced or dropped criminal charges but are designed to work more quickly because of the intensity of opioid addiction and the risk of fatal overdose.

Tennessee

[New Virtual Training Pilot Launched to Train Judges on Addiction Crisis](#)

Tennessee Courts

A select group of judges from across the state and court system are immersed in a new innovative training and education regimen focusing on opioid addiction. Looking to better address addiction in their courtrooms, thirteen judges are taking part in a pilot Project ECHO (Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes) initiative, which will provide education on issues including the physiology of addiction, evidence-based programming interventions, and

medication-assisted treatment. Originally developed for healthcare professionals, this is the first time Project ECHO is being used to train and educate judges. This venture is an initiative of the Appalachian/Midwest Regional Judicial Opioid Initiative (RJOI).

“When I saw a demonstration of Project ECHO, I knew this was exactly what our judges need,” said Judge Duane Slone, chair of RJOI and a circuit court judge in Tennessee’s 4th Judicial District. “This is hands-on, in-depth learning. Addiction has impacted every court in the state and judges are in a position to positively impact many people struggling with addiction issues. Whether it is a criminal case, juvenile case, child custody case or other family law case, a judge has the authority to mandate behavioral health and addiction assessments and treatment. It is essential judges understand addiction and the assessment and treatment options. The ECHO learning platform will increase the competence and confidence of our judges to help people with substance use disorders, particularly opioid use disorders.”

Wisconsin

[DOJ grant to help fight Milwaukee County opioid addiction](#)

Fox 6

A \$500,000 grant was also awarded to the county’s Adult Treatment Court and Veteran Treatment Court to develop programs to help people get clean.

“There is no such thing as recreational opioid use,” [Matthew Krueger, U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Wisconsin] said.