

Opioid-Related News and the Courts

Weekly Review

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National

[Johnson & Johnson and Distributors Finalize Landmark \\$26 Billion Opioid Settlement](#)

Associated Press

Drugmaker Johnson & Johnson and three major distributors finalized nationwide settlements over their role in the opioid addiction crisis Friday, an announcement that clears the way for \$26 billion to flow to nearly every state and local government in the U.S.

Taken together, the settlements are the largest to date among the many opioid-related cases that have been playing out across the country. They're expected to provide a significant boost to efforts aimed at reversing the crisis in places that have been devastated by it, including many parts of rural America.

Johnson & Johnson, AmerisourceBergen, Cardinal Health and McKesson announced the settlement plan last year, but the deal was contingent on getting participation from a critical mass of state and local governments.

Friday was the deadline for the companies to announce whether they felt enough governments had committed to participate in the settlement and relinquish the right to sue. The four companies notified lawyers for the governments in the case that their thresholds were met, meaning money could start flowing to communities by April.

National

[Justice Department Files Suit Against Pennsylvania Court System for Discriminating Against People with Opioid Use Disorder](#)

U.S. Department of Justice

Today, the Justice Department [filed suit](#) against the Unified Judicial System of Pennsylvania (UJS) for violating the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The department previously notified the UJS that its courts had engaged in discrimination by prohibiting or limiting the use of lawfully prescribed medication to treat Opioid Use Disorder (OUD) by individuals under court supervision. That [letter](#) of findings demanded that the UJS address the civil rights violations identified by the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division and the U.S. Attorney's Offices for the Eastern, Middle and Western Districts of Pennsylvania.

The Justice Department identified three individuals with OUD who were discriminated against by UJS Courts — specifically, the Northumberland and Jefferson County Courts of Common Pleas. Two individuals alleged that the Jefferson County Court ordered all probationers to stop using their prescribed medication for OUD. A third individual alleged that the Northumberland County Court required her to stop using her prescribed OUD medication to graduate from drug court. The department's investigation corroborated these allegations and additionally found evidence that other UJS Courts have policies that discriminate against individuals with OUD.

Alabama

[From struggling to sober: Colbert County drug court program's first graduates share their experience](#)

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However, through hard work and perseverance, they found enough strength to complete the program, giving them a much-appreciated second chance.

“When I had my son, we were both positive for methamphetamine,” said [drug court graduate Jasmine] Stewart.

“My little boy had opioids in his system, plus marijuana,” said [drug court graduate Hope] Allen.

Stewart and Allen were each charged with chemical endangerment of a child and lost custody of their children.

Prior to the drug court program, they say they had a tough time.

Tennessee

[Hawkins County Recovery Court among 12 programs profiled in state video series](#)

The Rogersville Review

Hawkins County Sessions Court Judge Todd's Ross and the Recovery Court he created in 2012 are profiled in a video created by the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (TDMHSAS).

If a person's resume is a roadmap, then Todd Ross has taken some twists and turns.

Prior to law school and becoming a judge, he was working in mental health and substance use treatment, and that led him to create a life-changing recovery court in one of Tennessee's most rural counties.

It's been a journey to basically start from scratch creating recovery resources and meeting basic needs of participants, but it's been a rewarding process.

“I worked with families, I worked with at-risk children for several years, and I worked in the adolescent intensive out-care program for several years,” Ross states in the video. “I saw what impact drug abuse has on children. That’s always stuck with me. When I knew I was going to be in a position as a judge to put some things in place to try to make a difference, then it wasn’t an option for me.”

