

# Opioid-Related News and the Courts

## Weekly Review

September 12, 2022



### California

#### [‘Overwhelmed With Fentanyl’: Why the Deadly Opioid Is Pouring Into San Francisco From Mexico](#)

San Francisco Standard

“That’s a huge change,” says Wade Shannon, who worked as the special agent in charge in the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration’s San Francisco Field Division before retiring at the end of August. “And it just means the market is getting flooded with synthetic opioids.”

The boom in supply, which also plagues other major American cities, suggests that the overdose crisis won’t end any time soon. The death toll has been rising, more or less steadily, in tandem with the supply of opiates and their synthetic opioid counterparts for two decades.

Last year, the U.S. suffered a record 108,000 overdose fatalities, mainly from fentanyl. In San Francisco, 641 people died from overdoses in 2021. This year, the city is on pace for slightly fewer such fatalities, perhaps due to the wider availability of naloxone, which can reverse an overdose.

### California

#### [Jenkins sets five-strike limit for low-level drug charges](#)

KPVI

[Laura Thomas, director of harm reduction policy at the San Francisco AIDS Foundation], cited past reporting in The Examiner that found San Francisco’s collaborative courts — of which the Community Justice Center is one — struggle to link people with treatment, particularly that which addresses their combined mental health and addiction struggles.

“Drug court treatment staff have basically abandoned hope of getting anyone into a dual diagnosis treatment program,” San Francisco Judge Michael Begert, who presides over San Francisco’s Adult Drug Court, said during a City hearing earlier this year.

## Florida

### [Chief Justice proclaims September Opioid and Stimulant Epidemic Awareness Month](#)

Florida Bar News

The opioid crisis has now reached epidemic proportions in the United States. According to the National Institute of Health, the number of drug overdose deaths now exceeds 70,000 per year nationwide. That's more deaths than automobile accidents or firearms.

While Florida's reform efforts have led to a significant reduction in the number of drug-related mortalities, opioid overdoses in the Sunshine State consistently exceed the national average.

Florida's Supreme Court recognizes the severe toll drug addiction takes on the lives of millions. Opioids such as fentanyl, a synthetic drug that is nearly 100 times more potent than morphine, are having a destructive impact on Florida and the nation.

## North Carolina

### [Creating courts where no veteran is left behind](#)

Western Carolina University

The court is coordinated by Kevin Rumley, who earned a master's in social work from WCU in 2018 and knows the struggles veterans can face.

Rumley was seriously injured as a 20-year-old Marine in Iraq in 2004. An explosion killed his best friend next to him and blew out his legs, leaving his body riddled with shrapnel. Doctors predicted Rumley would never walk again, which proved false. After 32 surgeries and 18 months in the hospital, he was discharged with a bag of opioids, no plan, and an addiction that quickly spiraled out of control.

Rumley has seen people enter the court at their lowest possible level. He's seen people leave having changed their lives in every way possible. He said he enjoys being someone in their corner throughout the hard journey to recovery.

## Ohio

### [Battling overdoses, stigmas within the local area an uphill battle](#)

Herald-Star

"I can't read the social media comments anymore, because people will say, 'Let them die. Don't give them Narcan. Just let them die, it's natural selection,'" said Laura Trifonoff, coordinator of Jefferson County's Phoenix Program, also known as the Adult Drug Court Program. "What happened to compassion for others? People are so quick to judge until it's their child or grandchild. It's heartbreaking."

William Holt, executive director of Jefferson County Prevention and Recovery Board, said people who haven't worked in the addiction field or known someone who experienced it don't understand "just how hijacked your life becomes."

### **Washington, D.C.**

#### [D.C. Heroin Overdoses Plunge As Fentanyl Use Soars](#)

The Washington Post

D.C.'s latest opioid overdose statistics, released by city officials in August, show that heroin was detected in only 15 of the 166 opioid deaths recorded in the first five months of 2022. That means just under 1 in 10 overdose victims died after using heroin — either by itself or with other substances — so far this year, compared to more than half of them in 2017.

The figures herald the arrival of a moment long predicted by public health experts: The near-total replacement of heroin by fentanyl, a far more powerful and deadly opioid that has driven drug deaths in America to historic highs.