



# Opioids and the Courts News: November 15, 2019

## Massachusetts

### [Massachusetts DOC Awarded \\$1.2M in Federal Funds to Tackle Opioid Addiction](#)

STL News

The Massachusetts Department of Correction will use more than \$1 million in federal funds to treat opioid use disorder among inmates effectively and humanely while reducing drug contraband behind prison walls, Commissioner Carol A. Mici said today.

Earlier this year, in light of the national opioid epidemic's impact on Massachusetts residents, including the state's incarcerated population, DOC sought funding to support its Managing Opioids in Prisons: Treatment & Prevention initiative. The goals of the project are to reduce crime and violence, associated costs, and recidivism rates by improving prison safety and promoting the health of inmates with opioid use disorders prior to their release. Last month, DOC was awarded \$1,238,195 over three years to support the project. The funds were part of a Justice Reinvestment Initiative grant from US Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance.

"Of about 8,300 inmates in Massachusetts state prison facilities, an estimated 1,500 have a diagnosed Opioid Use Disorder," said Commissioner Mici. "We are committed to fighting opioid use disorder and this money will help strengthen the continuum of substance use treatment we currently provide."

## Massachusetts

### ['Wounds too deep to see' -- veterans treatment court opens in Brockton](#)

The Enterprise

The state's growing network of veterans treatment courts has landed in southeastern Massachusetts, creating a formal link between the justice system and the medical and mental health resources.

Criminal defendants who have served in the military, regardless of how they were discharged, can apply to enter a veterans treatment court once their criminal cases conclude.

Jason Thomas, the veterans programs coordinator for the state's system of trial courts, said Massachusetts' vet courts were designed with "high-risk, high-need" veterans in mind, particularly those struggling with mental illness or substance abuse.

A speaker at the Plymouth County Veterans Treatment Court's opening ceremony, held Thursday afternoon at the War Memorial Building in Brockton, said veterans courts were designed to help heal "wounds that are often too deep to see," like post-traumatic stress





## Opioids and the Courts News: November 15, 2019

disorder, brain injuries or sexual trauma, which can contribute to the conditions that drive a person toward criminal behavior.

In Massachusetts, unlike some other states, veterans courts do not play a diversionary role in the justice system. Defendants won't appear in a veterans court until they've already been convicted of a crime or continued without a finding.

"It's essentially a special probation violation session," Thomas said. "This is a last step for you not to go back to jail."

### Massachusetts

[\\$2M grant will bolster services at drug courts](#)

Eagle Tribune

Two district courts in counties with the highest opioid-related deaths will benefit from a \$2 million grant for services to be provided to men and women battling addiction and mental health disorders.

"This grant, by providing support for these folks, is going to make a difference," said Massachusetts trial court Chief Paula Carey on Monday during the Mission Mill Cities Grant kickoff ceremony at Lawrence District Court.

"I think this is going to do amazing things for Lawrence and Lowell," Carey said during the ceremony held in courtroom 4, which was packed with court and local law enforcement officials.

...

"If you have not seen a drug court graduation, you really have to experience it," said Carey, adding "the transformation happens because all of these professions are working together."

Carey said the \$2 million grant was one of the largest ever received by the state's trial courts.

### Nevada

[Homeless and addicted for seven years, Talana is now sober giving back to those in need](#)

News3LV

It's just after 9 a.m. and Talana John is hard at work. A case manager for Westcare, she and a team fanned out at Leavitt Family Park, offering services to the homeless.



## Opioids and the Courts News: November 15, 2019

However, just a few short years ago, it was Talana needing help. Addicted to Oxycontin and meth, she once lived in this very park – homeless in Las Vegas for seven years.

“I was that girl begging for change at a convenience store. I was the girl digging in the dumpster in the middle of the night,” Talana said. “I started not to care anymore.”

...

Not long after, she wound up arrested and in jail. The judge offered her a choice: a lengthy sentence or drug court.

She chose to live and graduated from drug court.

“Drug court was one of the hardest things I'd ever done,” Talana said. “I was used to no responsibility, no discipline.”

Judge Carolyn Ellsworth has seen it before: addicts self-medicating to cover up emotional trauma.

“Abuse, neglect, horrible home lives – those are the things these folks in drug court are working on really hard,” Ellsworth said.

### New York

[Erie County Tapped as National Model for Combating Opioid Crisis](#)

Spectrum Local News

Erie County’s Opiate Epidemic Task Force played host Tuesday to leaders from five other counties across the nation.

...

The National Association of Counties partnered with the Department of Justice to coordinate the visit. Leaders from Ohio, Oregon, Georgia, Indiana, and Florida will spend the next few days observing various initiatives and taking part in panel discussions.

...

On Wednesday, the visiting county leaders will observe the opioid treatment court and meet with its judges.



## Opioids and the Courts News: November 15, 2019

### New York

[Glens Falls City Court expanding 'opioid diversion program'](#)

Post-Star

Twenty months ago, when Glens Falls City Court Judge Gary Hobbs began presiding over the region's first court-sanctioned "opioid diversion program," he wasn't sure how well the program would go.

[As it approaches its second year in existence,] Hobbs and those who work with the program have gotten their answer. Thirty people have graduated the one-year treatment program, and the vast majority have stayed off drugs after they completed it.

"We have an 87 percent success rate of people becoming clean," he said. "It has worked very well."

That success rate has prompted the state Office of Court Administration to expand the program to allow it to accept defendants from criminal cases filed in other courts in Warren County. The program has added a case manager, Bob Fish, who also oversees the Family Court Treatment Program in Washington County.

