

Opioid-Related News and the Courts

Weekly Review

November 5, 2021



National

[How COVID-19 Unleashed a New Way to Fight Opioid Addiction](#)

Daily Beast

Kevin Pearson used to face a hard choice any time he tried to get clean from heroin and found himself approaching a painful withdrawal: He could try to get on Suboxone or methadone, two of the medications that keep opioid users from craving drugs or withdrawing under what's called medically assisted treatment (MAT); or he could go back to using illicit drugs. The choice might seem easy to someone who didn't know better. Why wouldn't Pearson—or any of the 2.1 million Americans suffering from opioid addiction—just choose the safe, effective option of MAT?

Florida

[Florida receives \\$4.3 million to help rehab centers combat opioid epidemic](#)

The Capitolist

The [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#) (SAMHSA), a branch of the [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#) (HHS), is distributing an additional \$4.3 million to organizations across Florida to provide “multifaceted support” for the treatment of opioid use disorder amidst the national opioid epidemic.

The main focus of this round of funding for opioid use disorder treatment is for [Medication-Assisted Treatment](#) for Prescription Drug and Opioid Abuse (MAT-PDOA), also known as medically-assisted treatment (MAT). MAT programs provide a highly effective long-term treatment for opioid use disorder. MAT has been [shown] to have lasting impact on brain function by improving brain function and preventing relapse while simultaneously addressing the root causes of substance abuse through evidence-based behavioral therapies.

So far, SAMHSA has provided \$123 million nationally to help healthcare providers and communities combat substance use disorder.



Massachusetts

[Boston opens special court for arrests at homeless camp](#)

Associated Press

The city says it needs to hold court in a jail facility because people living in the homeless camp are medically compromised and it's quicker to have court proceedings just steps away at the South Bay House of Correction, [The Boston Globe reported](#).

But Anthony Benedetti, the chief counsel for the state public defender's office, said that based on Monday's proceedings, the court wasn't meeting its goal of getting those arrested into treatment faster than if they'd been tried at a regular courthouse.

City officials have said those dependent on opioids will be connected with substance abuse treatment options. But the three men tried by the court Monday spent five to six hours being booked and processed. One was sent to a treatment center, the other two would spend the night detoxing in jail, the Globe reported.

New Hampshire

["At some point the dam is going to break:" NH faces shortage of public defenders](#)

Concord Monitor

Judicial Council Executive Director Sarah Blodgett said that criminal cases have also become more complex, due to COVID, the opioid crisis, and mental health and substance abuse issues that have been worsened by the pandemic.

At the NH Public Defender, 28 staff attorneys have left their positions in the past 14 months, echoing a trend in public defender offices around the country. Burnout from high caseloads has played a role. Although other organizations have seen pandemic job changes, the turnover among public defenders is more pressing because criminal defense is a constitutional right.

"These jobs have gotten so much harder with COVID. We're expecting lawyers to go to jails to visit their clients and some of the jails have COVID outbreaks and it makes everything that much harder," Blodgett said.

North Carolina

[Beyond jails: Exploring policy changes to reduce need for bigger jails in NC](#)

Carolina Coast Online

Orange and Surry counties have their own arrest diversion programs funded through outside sources. Orange dedicates the county's share of Alcohol Beverage Control tax dollars to run its [Criminal Justice Resource Department](#), while Surry uses grants and the [coming opioid settlement money](#) to fund its [Substance Abuse Recovery Department](#).