

Opioid-Related Conditions and the Courts

In the News: July 2, 2020



National

[Pandemic unleashes a spike in overdose deaths](#)

Politico

Top Trump administration officials say drug overdose deaths are surging amid the coronavirus pandemic, driven by increased substance use due to anxiety, social isolation, and depression.

A White House drug policy office analysis shows an 11.4 percent year-over-year increase in fatalities for the first four months of 2020, confirming experts' early fears that precautions like quarantines and lockdowns combined with economic uncertainty would exacerbate the addiction crisis.

“The pandemic has caused my level of concern to go up,” White House drug czar Jim Carroll told POLITICO in an interview, acknowledging that overdose deaths were already starting to rise in the past year, after posting the first decline in three decades in 2018.

New York

[Mom seeks answers from Syracuse drug court after son's overdose during COVID-19](#)

CNYCentral

When an addiction meets a pandemic, it can cause more pressure on someone working on sobriety. Patrick Shutter was on the road of sobriety when his mom says he died of an overdose in late April, after a Syracuse drug court didn't let him back into a halfway house.

...

DeBois says she reached out to the court seeking help. She offered suggestions, such as Zoom meetings hoping to keep him in touch with his case manager. Her hope was not to have all the work of her son's recovery undone.

CNY Central asked DeBois if she believed video communication would have saved Patrick's life. “Yes,” she responded. “He had just enough reverence and respect and actually fear of the system.”

With coronavirus very much still [affecting] everyday life, CNY Central went to Judge James Cecile. He's the presiding judge for Syracuse Community Treatment Court. Judge Cecile gave his take on Shutter's situation during this pandemic.

CNY Central asked Judge Cecile, “Do you feel like the courts failed Mr. Shutter?”

“I got to be honest with you, certainly there was a failure everywhere. I think that because of COVID and everything that was going on because no one had ever come up with a contingency plan for something like this,” said Judge Cecile.

Judge Cecile was told that the court did what they could at that point.

