

# Opioid-Related News and the Courts

October 2, 2020



## National

### [‘The Drug Became His Friend’: Pandemic Drives Hike in Opioid Death](#)

New York Times

In the six months since Covid-19 brought the nation to a standstill, the opioid epidemic has taken a sharp turn for the worse. More than 40 states have recorded increases in opioid-related deaths since the pandemic began, [according to the American Medical Association](#). In Arkansas, the use of Narcan, an overdose-reversing drug, has tripled. Jacksonville, Fla., [has seen a 40 percent increase](#) in overdose-related calls. In March alone, York County in Pennsylvania recorded three times more overdose deaths than normal.

## Alabama

### [Walker County courts offer several options for people to get help with addiction](#)

Daily Mountain Eagle

For years, the only option that seemed available was arresting individuals who use illegal drugs. That tactic lost its effectiveness as the opioid epidemic continued to claim more lives.

“Though I was going to be brought to it kicking and screaming because I am an old style prosecutor and I do believe that you have to have punishment when you break the law, I did also understand that we are dealing with something that is much greater than it used to be,” [Walker County District Attorney Bill Adair] said.

Adair gave his blessing to Walker County’s Drug Court and expanded the county’s pre-trial diversion program so that there were other options for dealing with individuals with a substance use disorder.

## Michigan

### [Michigan Judges to Take Part in Regional Opioid Education Program](#)

Michigan Courts

Eleven judges from Michigan will be taking part in a new program called “Project ECHO” to help them better address opioid abuse in criminal and family court cases. An initiative of the Appalachian/Midwest Regional Judicial Opioid Initiative (RJOI), Project ECHO

(Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes) provides education on issues including the physiology of addiction, evidence-based programming interventions, and medication-assisted treatment.

“Local judges are community leaders who are uniquely positioned to make a difference on the front lines of the opioid epidemic,” said Michigan Supreme Court Chief Justice Bridget M. McCormack, who serves on the RJOI Leadership Committee. “Judges see case after case involving people struggling with drug abuse, and Project ECHO will help them better understand ways to address addiction and strengthen their engagement with the community.”

## **Michigan**

### [Michigan announces \\$80 million for opioids crisis response](#)

WPBN/WGTU

Gov. Gretchen Whitmer announced \$80 million in federal funding that will go toward prevention, treatment, and harm reduction services in response to the ongoing opioid crisis in Michigan.

The funding includes \$36.4 million from the new [State Opioid Response II \(SOR II\) grant](#) and \$43.1 million from an extension of the current [State Opioid Response I \(SOR I\) grant](#).

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The grants will also support diversion of individuals from the criminal justice system to treatment, expansion of treatment in correctional facilities and courts and assistance with reentry for individuals leaving incarceration.

## **Michigan**

### [Judge Benjamin Bolser selected for 8-state opioid initiative](#)

Alpena News

A local judge has been chosen to be part of an eight-state effort to combat the opioid epidemic by connecting judges with medical experts.

Judge Benjamin Bolser, chief judge of Alpena and Montmorency counties’ 26th Circuit Courts, is part of a pilot program launched by the Appalachian/Midwest Regional Judicial Opioid Initiative.

Along with 10 other judges throughout the state, Bolser will participate in a series of videoconference conversations with physicians who will teach the judges about the psychology of addiction, medication-assisted treatment, and intervention programs that have been proven to work.