



Opioids and the Courts News: Nov. 28, 2017

National

[Court To Rule On Whether Relapse By An Addicted Opioid User Should Be A Crime](#)

NPR – Morning Edition

Ten days later, Eldred was released from jail when her lawyer found a bed in a residential treatment facility. That lawyer — Lisa Newman-Polk — brought Eldred's case to Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court, arguing that the courts should not punish people for having the disease of addiction.

"This idea that a court can order a person to stop using — with the threat of punishment — is not grounded," Newman-Polk says. "If it worked to punish people for addiction and relapse we would have a cured nation."

Newman-Polk argues that courts should consider scientific research about addiction, and apply it in practice — much as courts have done with the science about brain development and juvenile offenders. She says addiction is a medical condition, so it's unconstitutional to incarcerate someone for relapsing — because that's part of the disease.

National

[Saving Lives in the 'Overdose Capital of America'](#)

BillMoyers.com

Heroin(e) is a powerful film that follows the stories of three women in Huntington, West Virginia, who are battling the opioid crisis on its front lines. Drug addiction is so common in Huntington, the “overdose capital of America,” that it’s weaved into the fabric of everyday life. In one scene, paramedics work to revive an overdose victim at a convenience store while people step around the commotion and move along the checkout line as if nothing is happening.

Judge Patricia Keller is part mother-hen, part school principal, doling out encouragement and discipline with equal compassion. Necia Freeman, a volunteer with a local church group, drives around at night providing food, shelter and help to those teetering on the edge.

Georgia

[Drug courts offer treatment over prison](#)

Valdosta Daily Times

Amy Crumley, treatment provider for Lowndes County’s accountability court, which is still relatively new, said opioids are a different ball game when it comes to substance abuse.



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Crumley said she has been pushing for the county to begin a medication-assisted treatment program to provide people with Vivitrol, an opioid antagonist that can help people avoid relapse.

She said the drug can cost \$1,500 and is not covered under insurance. Crumley said that most of the people she sees in drug court are using methamphetamine to get over the detoxification from opioids.

Illinois

[Peoria County could expand drug court to address overdose epidemic](#)

Peoria Journal Star

With the number of heroin overdoses skyrocketing, the county's top prosecutor is willing to consider anything to help curtail the epidemic.

And one arrow in his quiver that State's Attorney Jerry Brady could consider using is Peoria County's drug court, an alternative to the normal criminal justice system that puts an emphasis on treatment, not punishment. The idea is simple — get more drug users into the program that requires treatment, constant monitoring by court personnel and offers the incentive of having charges dropped if they complete the program.

Kentucky

[Proposed law would expand Veterans Treatment Court](#)

Kentucky Today

“Opioid addiction is one of the most serious problems we have here in Kentucky,” [Sen. Reginald Thomas, D-Lexington] said. “This is one of the steps toward trying to reduce and eliminate that addiction. This will be another tool in reducing the opioid addiction problem.”

Massachusetts

[Courtroom drug ban mulled](#)

Boston Herald

Massachusetts Trial Court leadership is taking the extraordinary step of moving to ban fentanyl and carfentanil from courtrooms — even as evidence — citing the lethal risks surrounding the ultra-potent drugs, according to a letter provided to the Herald.

“Given their demonstrated potency and toxicity, the risk of accidental exposure to these substances, and the training necessary to safely handle even those samples that have been securely packaged as evidence, we believe that a ban on these substances may be a necessary and reasonable measure,” wrote Paula Carey, chief justice of the Trial Court, in a letter outlining her concerns to Essex District Attorney Jonathan Blodgett earlier this month.



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Michigan

[Michigan Group Provides Support Those With Opioid Addictions](#)

Associated Press

Cook and Eaton County District Court Judge Julie Reincke began researching what it would take to form a local chapter of Families Against Narcotics last year.

Reincke said opioid addiction is often the common theme tying together everything from home invasions to petty thefts. She estimates 90 percent of the criminal cases she presides over involve some form of addiction to drugs or alcohol.

"I live and breathe it every day," she said. "I see so many people. We need, as a society, to get to a point where treatment is as easy to get as heroin, and we're not there. It's sad."

Michigan

[Tri-county drug court is in the works](#)

Huron Daily Tribune, The (Bad Axe, MI)

As the opioid crisis looms, judges from Huron, Sanilac and Tuscola counties are working with the state to form a tri-county drug court.

Huron County Circuit Court Judge Gerald M. Prill discussed the effort Monday during a presentation to the Michigan Association of Counties, Region VII, at Bay Shore Camp.

North Carolina

[Richmond County leaders offer solutions to opioid crisis](#)

Richmond County Daily Journal

Chief District Court Judge Scott Brewer said he works with district attorneys and sheriffs to help someone they identify as needing treatment by making it a condition that they will only be given a bond if they complete treatment at Samaritan Colony.

"Locking people up for addiction is a waste of time, it's a complete waste of time," Brewer said.

North Carolina

[AG honors 2 locals with Dogwood Awards for devotion to fix opioid crisis](#)

WWAY NewsChannel 3

Judge Ola Lewis from Brunswick County has served as an assistant district attorney, district court judge and superior court judge throughout her career and was a driving force behind the Brunswick County Opioid Addiction Task Force. Sen. Bill Rabon (R-



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Brunswick Co.) accepted the award on behalf of Judge Lewis, who could not attend the ceremony.

Ohio

[Review of Ohio's criminal sentencing seeks balance between punishment, rehabilitation](#)

The Columbus Dispatch

Franklin County Common Pleas Court Judge Charles Schneider desires more sentencing discretion to better match the offender and crime to the appropriate sanction.

Amid a glut of nonviolent drug offenders and probation violators serving time in state prisons, Ohio again is taking a look at criminal-justice reform.

Pennsylvania

[Chester County Drug Court celebrates 20-year anniversary](#)

The Mercury

Christopher Murphy, the head of Adult Probation, said the program had proven its effectiveness over the two decades since it began. And it had done so in personal terms as well as those economic benefits.

“Most of what we hear is how bad the opioid crisis is, and it is bad,” he said, following the anniversary event. “But we don’t hear so much about people overcoming their addictions. One recent graduate who was about to have a baby thanked the Drug Court team. She never saw herself living, let alone having a child. So many parents thank the program for giving them their children back.

Pennsylvania

[Governor Wolf Highlights Progress in Opioid Abuse Epidemic During Visit to Independence Blue Cross](#)

Office of the Governor

Provided \$2 million to expand specialty drug courts – a strategy that will divert offenders into programs that provide real treatment and recovery options.

Pennsylvania

[Join Easton area civic leaders seeking answers to drug abuse epidemic](#)

lehighvalleylive.com

Northampton County Judge Craig Dally will discuss the 2-year-old [drug court program](#) over which he presides.



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West Virginia

[WVU Economist Estimates Opioid Epidemic Cost State \\$1B](#)

Associated Press

The estimate includes \$322 million in productivity lost from fatalities, \$316 million in productivity lost from addicted people working below peak levels and \$320 million tied up in health care, addiction treatment and police, courts, jails and prisons, according to John Deskins, director of WVU's Bureau of Business and Economic Research.

Wisconsin

[Milwaukee County receives \\$2.6 million in grants to boost drug treatment court and battle opioid crisis](#)

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

Milwaukee County Executive Chris Abele introduced Ellis at a news conference held to announce \$2.6 million in federal and state grants targeting the local opioid crisis.

A \$505,000 grant from the state Department of Health and Human Services will pay for moving 75 people off the county Behavioral Health Division waiting list and into the AODA (alcohol and other drug addiction) residential treatment program in 2018, Abele said.

A separate \$2.1 million, five-year grant from the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration will enhance the family drug treatment court's services for voluntary participants and their children, Abele said.

Wisconsin

[Marathon County Creating a Drug Court](#)

WSAU

In the county budget passed last week, Marathon County set aside \$1.6 million for the creation of a drug court.

[County Administrator Brad] Karger says it's going to take more than just the creation of the drug court to put an end to the opioid problem the county is facing and that this is just the first of many steps to be taken.