



Opioids and the Courts News: December 20, 2019

National

[Do courts lack info about medication-assisted treatment as an option for defendants with opioid addiction?](#)

ABA Journal

In November, the National Judicial Opioid Task Force released a [wide-ranging report](#) examining how courts can best address the ongoing opioid epidemic. The task force was created by the Conference of Chief Justices and the Conference of State Court Administrators, both of which are staffed by the National Center for State Courts.

Among its recommendations is that for those people who need medication-based treatment (consisting of cognitive therapy, blood testing and prescription medicine to ease withdrawal symptoms) for opioid addiction, the treatment should be a clinically driven decision between the individual and their health care provider.

Additionally, the report found that courts lack education and access to “quality, evidence-based treatment” for opioid use disorder, and the stigma around opioid addiction is harmful to helping parties in criminal and civil courts.

“The scientific evidence is clear and broadly accepted: Opioid use disorder (OUD) is a treatable chronic brain disease. Further, the use of the three primary FDA-approved medications to treat OUD produces successful outcomes and saves lives,” the report states. “Unfortunately, the majority of people with OUD in the United States receive no treatment at all. Courts are often not aware of medication-based treatment, and only 36% of approved treatment facilities offer at least one of the FDA-approved medications.”

Georgia

[\\$1.7 million in grants awarded in Georgia to combat drugs, crime](#)

WGXA

The Justice Department’s Office of Justice Programs (OJP) announced awards totaling more than \$333 million to help communities across the nation affected by the opioid crisis.

In the Middle District of Georgia, the Unified Government of Athens-Clarke County was awarded \$600,000 under the Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Program.

The Columbus Consolidated Government received a \$735,360 grant under the Family Drug Court Program and a \$400,000 grant under the Juvenile Drug Treatment Court Program.



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Kentucky

[Kentucky father takes son to court: 'It had to be done or we would have lost our son'](#)

Courier Journal

In 2011, Paul and his wife used a Kentucky state law called “Casey’s Law” to convince a judge to order their adult son into addiction treatment.

Ultimately, it’s what saved Matt’s life.

“I knew it had to be done or we would have lost our son for good,” Paul Peterson said.

These cases are confidential, [and] heard in closed courtrooms. But the Peterson family agreed to share their story to help others.

...

Matt’s drug use began early. He and his buddy were struck by a van crossing the street when he was in the seventh-grade, injuring Matt’s back. A doctor prescribed the 11-year-old the pain medicine Vicodin at a time when doctors didn’t fully understand the addiction risks of opioids. Matt got more Vicodin a few years later when his wisdom teeth were pulled.

Matt liked the way he felt on the narcotic, so he and his friends began to crush and snort pain pills while drinking in high school. Initially, they did this once a month. Eventually, Matt did it every day.

“I didn't know opioids could basically take over your life,” Matt said.

Michigan

[Opioid crisis focus of federal grant for Muskegon](#)

MLive

This grant facilitates “collaborations between criminal justice, mental health and substance abuse treatment systems to serve individuals with mental illness or co-occurring mental illness and substance abuse issues,” according to a justice department press release. The 36th District Court in Detroit also received \$408,650.

All told, more than \$6.3 million will reach Michigan communities to develop training programs and implement new or strengthen existing drug courts for individuals and families. Michigan State Police will also receive \$1 million through the Opioid Affected Youth Initiative, which focuses on developing data-driven responses to opioid use.



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Nevada

[Justice Department awards Nevada \\$333 Million to fight opioid crisis](#)

News 3 Las Vegas

Grants will help law enforcement officers, emergency responders and treatment professionals across the country coordinate their response to overdoses. Funds will also provide services for children and youth affected by the crisis and will support the nationwide network of drug and treatment courts. Other awards will address prescription drug abuse, expand the capacity of forensic labs and support opioid-related research

The following awards were made to organizations in the District of Nevada:

Adult Drug Court and Veterans Treatment Court Discretionary Grant Program

More than \$44 million is being awarded nationwide to jurisdictions, academic institutions, and training and technical assistance providers to establish, expand, assist, and research the effectiveness of adult drug courts, including veterans treatment courts. The Las Vegas Township Justice Court received a \$651,324 grant under this program.

Juvenile Drug Treatment Court Program

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's Juvenile Drug Treatment Court Program awarded \$3 million nationwide to provide resources to state, local and tribal governments to create and enhance juvenile drug treatment court programs for youth in the justice system who have substance abuse issues, with a specific focus on opioid abuse. The County of Elko received a \$400,000 grant under this program.

New York

[Opioid Court expands to Dunkirk today](#)

Dunkirk Observer

Starting today, the first Opioid Court south of Buffalo is now operational.

As part of the City Court in Dunkirk, the new Opioid Court provides specialized services to Chautauqua County area residents suffering from addiction to opioids, a class of drug that includes the illegal drug heroin, synthetic opioids such as fentanyl, and pain relievers available legally by prescription. The Dunkirk Opioid Court's primary mission is to save lives by offering immediate treatment and counseling to addicted individuals while the prosecution of any crimes charged against them are temporarily suspended.

The first Opioid Court was started by Judge Craig D. Hannah of the Buffalo City Court in 2016. His program was designed to assist addicts facing criminal charges by offering them immediate treatment. The success of Buffalo Opioid Court has drawn national attention and was expanded to Niagara County in 2018, and now to Chautauqua County.



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According to the New York State Unified Court System Office of Policy and Planning, the Opioid Court model holds great promise for saving lives. By rapidly connecting participants to evidence-based treatment and employing intensive judicial supervision, opioid courts incorporate effective practices honed through decades of research in the treatment court and behavioral health fields.

