

# Opioid-Related News and the Courts

## Weekly Review

June 4, 2021



### National

#### [Fentanyl is Spreading Nationwide and Will Lead to a “Fourth Wave” of Overdose Deaths](#)

Buzzfeed News

The US overdose crisis has only worsened during the [coronavirus pandemic](#), and public health experts are calling for more drastic measures to get it under control.

More than 91,000 people died of drug overdoses nationwide in 2020, according to initial CDC data, a 30% increase in one year. But it’s unclear how far the Biden administration is willing to go to address the crisis, which experts say could take unprecedented and divisive interventions like safe injection sites for people who use drugs.

“Things were on a bad trajectory before, and now it has gotten even worse,” said epidemiologist Chelsea Shover of the UCLA David Geffen School of Medicine.

The drug still driving [overdose deaths](#) is fentanyl, a synthetic opioid that had largely replaced heroin in the illicit drug market on the East Coast and has now spread west, [\[Shover’s\] research shows](#), showing up in fake pain pills and in cocaine in states like California and Washington.

### National

#### [Webinar: Science of Medication for Substance Use Disorder](#)

Providers Clinical Support System

**Target Audience:** This webcast was developed for judges—whether presiding over state, municipal, general jurisdiction, treatment/specialty courts and/or whether they are law trained or not.

**Webinar Description:** Substance and opioid use disorders (OUDs) are associated with criminal behavior, arrest, and incarceration. Effective treatments are needed to reduce the burden of OUDs on public safety and on the public health. Fortunately, there are three medications that are approved for the treatment of opioid dependence. This is the first webinar in a two-part series.

**Presenter(s): Hon. Shaun R. Floerke and Ellen Edens, M.D.** Judge Floerke is the President and CEO of the Duluth Superior Area Community Foundation in Minnesota. He retired after 16 years as a District Court Judge in Duluth where he founded and

presided over the South St. Louis Country DWI Court, one of four National Center for DWI Courts Academy Courts in the nation and for which he and his team won the National Association of Drug Court Professionals DWI Court Leadership Award in 2018. Dr. Edens is an Associate Professor of Psychiatry at the Yale School of Medicine, Substance Use Disorder (SUD) Lead for the VA National Telemental Health Center, Associate Director of Yale's Addiction Psychiatry fellowship, Co-director of the Connecticut VA's Interprofessional Advanced Fellowship in Addiction Treatment, and Co-Director of the Opioid Reassessment Clinic, a primary care-based clinic designed to assess and treatment patients with issues around opioid safety, efficacy and misuse.

## Washington

[When crimes are mixed with addiction, drug court offers solutions](#)

Seattle Times

Dean Lum is a King County Superior Court judge and chief judge of King County Drug Diversion Court (KCDDC). Christina Mason is program manager for King County Drug Diversion Court.

KCDDC provides an offramp from incarceration and the legal system. Those who successfully complete the program get their charges dismissed in as few as 10 months. For people of color, who are disproportionately and unfairly represented in the criminal legal system, this offramp is an important response to the systemic racism that infects the criminal system. And it represents a second or third chance at treatment and recovery for people who have already received pre-filing diversion.

Substance-use disorders can affect anyone, but some face greater barriers to recovery. The majority of KCDDC participants are experiencing homelessness when they enter the program. So, in addition to substance use disorder treatment and access to medications for opioid use disorder, King County Drug Diversion Court provides whatever program participants need to be successful, whether it's transitional housing, a bus pass to get to treatment, or a phone and minutes so they can do telehealth.