



# Opioids and the Courts News: November 8, 2019

## National

### [Fall 2019 Conference](#)

National College of Probate Judges

11:00 AM – 12:15 PM Educational Session | Topic: National Judicial Opioid Task Force, Presented by Chief Justice Paul Reiber, Supreme Court of Vermont and Judge Shaun Floerke, 6th Judicial District of Minnesota

- [Reiber Biography](#)
- [Weinstein Biography](#)
- [Reiber-Weinstein Understanding the Basics of Addiction](#)
- [Reiber-Weinstein Probate Judges Presentation](#)
- [Reiber-Weinstein Involuntary Commitment & Guardianship](#)

## Massachusetts

### [Federally funded program coming to Middlesex County drug courts](#)

Lowell Sun

With the opioid epidemic continuing to harshly affect Middlesex County families, more federal spending is coming to local courts to address the issue and help those in need.

Massachusetts Trial Court Chief Justice Paula Carey and Court Administrator Jonathan Williams, along with state and local officials, formally announced the launch of the MISSION-Mill Cities Grant Monday afternoon in a packed Fenton Judicial Center room.

The grant, which officials said was a \$2 million, 5-year grant received from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, will go toward funding more recovery specialists and case managers employed by the Gavin Foundation, a Boston-based addiction recovery organization.

The federal grant is the fifth from the administration within the commonwealth, with other programs previously being used in Quincy and Cape Cod, Specialty Court Coordinator Sheila Casey said.

An increase in specialists and managers on the ground, Carey said, will help those in-and-out of Lawrence and Lowell drug courts get support — like getting to and from AA meetings or receiving more mental health care. The money from the grant is expected to be fully implemented into the courts by May, officials said.

The drug courts will share the grant.



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Representatives from Billerica and Lowell (including Lowell District Court Judge Ellen Caulo and probation chief Steve Mastandrea) and U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Warren were present during the 35-minute public event.

“This is a terrific opportunity,” said Carey, who added that the funds increase “communication” among the courts. “This will help all of those who are going through a chaotic time in their lives.”

### New York

[Three strikes but still not out: Inside the Bronx ‘Opioid Court’ where addicts get extra swings at recovery](#)

Daily News

The man standing in a Bronx courtroom with thick dark hair, more than a few brushes with the law and a drug addiction so bad he was considered a high risk for an overdose had burned through so many chances — second, third and even a fourth.

Just 27 years old, he worried he’d run out of luck and feared his darkening future.

“I’m committing suicide every day,” he told the judge inside the Bronx County Hall of Justice in early October. “Every day I’m playing Russian roulette.”

The admission came after Judge George Grasso offered him yet another chance at freedom by staying in a program of recovery rather than a jail cell.

As Bronx Criminal Court’s supervising judge, Grasso handles cases in the borough’s Overdose Avoidance and Recovery (OAR) court — commonly known as “Opioid Court,” though its defendants use a wide variety of illegal drugs.

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[Bronx District Attorney Darcel] Clark, Grasso and [Alternative to Incarceration (ATI) specialist Avery] McNeil discussed expanding the OAR model with others in the criminal justice community at the New York Opioid Court Citywide Conference last month. Manhattan and Staten Island have already adopted variations of the program, and talks of an OAR court in Queens are underway. Brooklyn has an alternatives to incarceration court, but it’s not the same as OAR.

The goals of each program, regardless of any differences, remain common across the city.





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“You’re not going to be successful all the time, you might not even be successful most of the time, but you’ll be successful some of the time,” Grasso told The News. “When we have given you a foundation to break free of these opioids and this fentanyl, and we have dramatically reduced the possibility that you’re going to become another overdose and death statistic...that’s success.”

### Tennessee

[Tennessee reserve of funds is most in US More than \\$730M of federal anti-poverty money not spent](#)

The Tennessean

Tennessee opted to not transfer any of its TANF funds to the social services program in 2017 — or since, a spokesman confirmed.

“In recent months, we’ve asked leadership to analyze the needs of our customers and look into this possibility,” an email from DHS spokesman Sky Arnold said in response to questions about why the department has not transferred any TANF funds to the program.

Federal grants specifically to combat the opioid crisis are quickly exhausted in Tennessee and any other source of funding is desperately needed, according to Mary-Linden Salter, executive director of the Tennessee Association of Alcohol, Drug & other Addiction Services.

“The funds we have are not even close to meeting the need,” she said. “The dollars you are talking about could be more broadly spent for treatment. We need funds for transportation, childcare and sober living.”

Federal rules allow for the social security block grant to be used for those needs.

Judge Duane Slone, who helped set up a treatment program for pregnant opioid abusers in rural northeastern Tennessee, said his program will run out of funding in six months. “We’re struggling,” he said. Slone said he was unaware there were potential funds from the TANF surplus that could be used for addiction treatment.

### Tennessee

[Opioids similar to ‘chemical warfare,’ Terry says](#)

Murfreesboro Post

Medicated in jail



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One panelist, Egon Grissom, deputy chief of Rutherford County Sheriff's Office, shared how mental health affects the Adult Detention Center. Fifty-three percent of 900-plus inmates take medicine to treat mental health issues. Among the male inmates, 47 percent take such medicine, and a whopping 90 percent of female inmates do so.

"Every single one" has one or more issues (alcohol, mental health or drugs), Grissom said, and he said more support programs are needed.

Panelist Steve Ervin, a county commissioner and director of the Rutherford County Drug Court, said demand for his services is growing, especially for Recovery Court, and they are hiring another case manager.

Another panelist, Barry Tidwell, a Rutherford County judge who runs a mental health court, said that since launching it in 2017, he has learned some lessons. One is that a "successful" defendant may not be someone who is never arrested anymore, but instead is one who is arrested less often. The number of days a person stays sober is another measure of success.

### West Virginia

[Armstead to serve as state Supreme Court Chief Justice in 2020; Jenkins will have turn in 2021](#)  
West Virginia Record

[Justice Tim] Armstead said the opioid crisis will be a focus of the court in the coming year.

"One of the greatest challenges facing West Virginia is the effect the opioid crisis has had on our families," he said. "Our court system plays a key role in ensuring that every child in West Virginia has a safe and healthy home and a loving family who supports and nurtures them. In 2020, we will continue to make their future a priority for our court," Armstead said.

### Wisconsin

[State of the Judiciary: Chief Justice Roggensack Reports on Judicial Branch Activity](#)  
State Bar of Wisconsin News

Treatment Courts. The chief justice noted that "treatment courts continue to address the extraordinary loss of life through death or overwhelming disability that opioids, methamphetamine, and alcohol are producing in Wisconsin."



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### Wisconsin

[Washington County receives \\$293K grant to tackle opioid crisis](#)

Washington County Daily News

Almost 50 additional patients can receive opioid-related treatment next year, and services will be expanding throughout Washington County, thanks to a state grant. The Human Services Department has been awarded the \$293,000 grant through the State Opioid Response (SOR).

Human Services Department Director Julie Driscoll said she is thrilled to receive funding for the second year through the State Opioid Response Grant, especially now with the drug court pilot to begin with the new year.

“We will continue to fund residential care, medication-assisted treatment, intensive outpatient services, as well as care coordination and case management,” she said. “We will continue to fund Vivitrol injections, but will also be increasing our psychiatry time in the mental health clinic to offer Suboxone or Sublocade. The costs of these medications can be upwards of \$1,000 to \$1,500 a month without insurance.”

