



Opioids and the Courts News: August 10, 2018

National

[Opening Remarks by LSC Board Chair John G. Levi.](#)

Legal Services Corporation

We gather today as LSC has established two new task forces, launched at our last Board meeting in April in Washington, and each of which has met during the past few weeks. Comprised of 27 leaders from the legal and medical communities, federal and state government, and veterans and social services organizations, our Opioid Task Force will, among other things, highlight the critical role legal aid programs are playing in conjunction with other service providers in helping people address those issues and identify innovative and best practices to meet these challenges.

National

[Opioids & Substance Abuse in Indian Country](#)

National Indian Justice Center

Tribal communities throughout the U.S. are disproportionately impacted by opioids and substance abuse. A National Institute on Drug Abuse survey found that American Indian students' annual heroin and OxyContin use was about two to three times higher than the national averages from 2009 to 2012. This training session will provide information about the Healing to Wellness Program designed to address opioid addiction administered by the Saginaw Chippewa Tribal Court.

National

[Rate of women addicted to opioids during pregnancy quadrupled in 15 years, CDC says](#)

CNN

Nationwide, the rate of opioid use disorder among women delivering babies more than quadrupled over the 15-year period ending in 2014, according to a [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#) published Thursday by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Use of opioid drugs, whether heroin or prescription painkillers, during pregnancy harms the health of both mother and child and can lead to stillbirth, preterm labor, neonatal abstinence syndrome and, in some cases, death of the mother.



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National

[The Children of the Opioid Crisis](#)

Wall Street Journal

At the funeral home before [24-year-old Mikaya Feucht] was cremated, her younger son, Reed, clung to her through the open casket. “And it wasn’t just a quick hug. It was heartbreaking,” says Chuck Curran, his grandfather.

Widespread abuse of powerful opioids has pushed U.S. overdose death rates to all-time highs. It has also traumatized tens of thousands of children. The number of youngsters in foster care in many states has soared, overwhelming social workers and courts. Hospitals that once saw few opioid-addicted newborns are now treating dozens a year.

National

[With compassionate outreach, a city cuts its drug overdose rate in half](#)

Christian Science Monitor

At the heart of the [Quick Response Team] QRT model is a simple idea: compassionate outreach for those dealing with substance abuse – well after the sirens stop wailing. It has uplifted both first responders and those struggling with addiction, with each side able to see more humanity in each other. Those who have overdosed are amazed to see police officers or paramedics arrive on their front stoop not because someone called them with an emergency but because they wanted to check in. And those who have become wearied by the toll of 911 calls – being spit on, hit, or numbed by reviving the same people over and over – are now being met with gratitude.

Missouri

[Nearly \\$400,000 in federal funds heading to 2 Missouri drug courts](#)

Herald-Whig

Nearly \$400,000 in federal funding is being released to continue operating two drug court programs in Northern Missouri, including one serving Shelby County.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has awarded a \$399,620 grant that will be used to support the 41st Circuit Treatment Court serving Macon and Shelby counties and the 9th Circuit Treatment Court serving Chariton, Linn, and Sullivan counties.

Drug courts focus on substance abuse rehabilitation instead of putting offenders on the usual criminal prosecution track.



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Tennessee

[Tennessee Judicial Opioid Initiative](#)

Supreme Court of Tennessee

Overview: Based on the work of the National Opioid Task Force and Regional Judicial Opioid Initiative, TJOI has comprised five guiding principles and six recommendations that they embody in their overall mission of addressing the opioid epidemic in Tennessee.

Guiding Principles

- **A Comprehensive Approach:** The justice system should lead the way in delivering solutions to the opioid epidemic at every intersection point of the justice system.
- **All Hands On Deck:** Judges should maximize their roles as conveners, bringing together government agencies and community stakeholders to address the opioid epidemic.
- **Individualized Treatment and Services:** Courts should ensure that treatment services target the individuals needs.
- **Protecting Children and Supporting Families:** Interventions should incorporate a continuum of treatment strategies, recovery support services, and expeditious placement of children in a safe, stable environment.
- **Making a Difference and Measuring Success:** The courts should use data-driven decision-making approaches and establish robust data collection and quality assurance to use data for objectively assessing performance.

Texas

[House Select Committee on Opioids and Substance Abuse - Written testimony by David Slayton Executive Director, Texas Judicial Council](#)

Texas Office of Court Administration

Texas Judicial Council Recommendations

- The Legislature should establish a statewide Opioid Task Force to promote communication and collaboration between local and state leaders, experts, and advocates in confronting the opioid abuse and dependency epidemic as it crosses Texas.
- The Judicial Council should collect relevant case level data from all court levels including magistrates, to generate more timely and detailed information to support policy, planning, management, and budget decisions for the justice system. The collection of the relevant case level data should be fully funded by the Legislature.
- The Legislature should amend Title 2, Subtitle K of the Government Code to provide the Judicial Branch with increased oversight of specialty courts.
- The Legislature should appropriate funds to the Office of Court Administration for the development of a statewide specialty court case management system.



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Texas

[Texas criminal justice professionals push for more treatment options to ...](#)

Austin American-Statesman

Several people who testified Tuesday also spoke to the need for better data collection to gauge the opioid problem, including tracking opioid overdose deaths.

Seeing a lack of available data from the courts system, the Texas Judicial Council surveyed nearly 500 Texas judges and found that 70 percent said opioids were a moderate or major problem in the state.

Texas

[Treatment options for drug use severely lacking in Texas, experts say](#)

Austin American-Statesman

Williamson County Justice of the Peace Bill Gravell testified that in the past three years he has signed an increasing number of death certificates where opioids were a factor. But nowhere in the Texas electronic registry is a place to record that. The system only asks for a cause of death such as suicide, homicide, accident or undetermined — not for toxicology results.

“I do see an uptick,” Gravell said. “I just don’t know how I am going to support that statistically.”

Gravell said opioid problems have extended into his courtroom, where he is seeing more kids admit to using prescription drugs like Oxycontin and fentanyl. Twenty-five percent of the children in the state’s juvenile justice system have substance abuse problems, the Texas Juvenile Justice Department said.

Washington

[Seattle-area parents who struggled with addiction change their lives for their children](#)

Seattle Times

A King County court program that reunites families separated by addiction found that homelessness is a common theme.

...

Chavarry, 43, is one of 127 parents who have graduated from the [King County Superior Court’s Family Treatment Court](#) since it started in 2004. The court is an alternative system for parents with child-welfare cases who also have drug or alcohol addictions.

