

Opioid-Related News and the Courts

Weekly Review

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National

[EXPLAINER: Where Do US Opioid Trials, Settlements Stand?](#)

Associated Press

More than 3,000 lawsuits have been filed by state and local governments, Native American tribes, unions, hospitals and other entities in state and federal courts over the toll of opioids. Most allege the industry created a public nuisance in a crisis that has been linked to the deaths of 500,000 Americans over the past two decades.

An overview of the litigation and settlements involving the various companies:

- PURDUE PHARMA...
- OTHER DRUGMAKERS...
- DISTRIBUTION COMPANIES...
- PHARMACIES...
- CONSULTING COMPANY...

National

[Treatment for opioid addiction often brings discrimination](#)

Associated Press

This week, the [U.S. Department of Justice published](#) new [guidelines](#) aimed at dealing with the problem: They assert that it's illegal under the Americans with Disabilities Act to discriminate against people because they are using prescribed methadone or other medications to treat opioid use disorder.

The guidelines don't change federal government policy, but they do offer clarification and signal that authorities are watching for discrimination in a wide range of settings. The Justice Department's actions this year also show it's taken an interest in the issue, reaching multiple legal settlements, filing a lawsuit and sending a warning letter alleging other violations.

Kentucky

[Alternatives to incarceration create big savings for taxpayers](#)

Murray Ledger & Times

It has been three years since Kentucky Supreme Court Chief Justice John D. Minton Jr. began the Responsive Education to Support Treatment in Opioid Recovery Efforts (RESTORE) Initiative. While concerns about the opioid epidemic may have served as

the catalyst, the initiative is aimed at addressing substance abuse through restorative measures rather than punitive ones.

Calloway County Circuit Court Clerk Linda Avery explained, “We have to look at substance abuse because for the majority of our cases, the charge may not be a drug-related charge, but the person ended up in that situation because of drugs. They needed to get more drugs; they needed money to buy more drugs; or ‘I’m going to sell drugs now to pay for my own drug habit.’ In the 15 years that I have been clerk, that scenario has increased immeasurably. That’s one of the reasons that I have chosen to get involved with the Community Corrections Board.”

Pennsylvania

[Court eyes drug treatment in prison](#)

Altoona Mirror

The Pennsylvania Commonwealth Court, in an opinion released earlier this week, might be opening the door for the use of Medication-Assisted Treatment for substance abusers who are in state prisons.

The use of medications such as methadone, Suboxone, and Vivitrol to treat substance abusers has become more common for addicts who are not in prison.

However, an inmate like Mark C. Rokita Jr., 37, who was committed to the State Correctional Institution at Houtzdale on drug and gun offenses, is barred by the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections from even seeking MAT assistance to deal with his admitted opioid abuse.

Virginia

[Steps communities are taking to rebound from the opioid crisis](#)

Virginia Public Media

[Reporter] Angie Miles: So, with your expertise and \$200,000 in federal funding through AmeriCorps, you set out to help the community craft its response, four pivotal points, goals that they chose they wanted to focus on, what are those?

[Virginia Tech professor] Carlin Rafie, PhD: The first was to set up a continuum of care for individuals coming into the emergency rooms in the hospitals that serve that area, get those individuals into the hands of peer counselors who then would link them and connect them back to the community services board where they would receive ongoing care for their substance use problem.

Angie Miles: And when you say peer counselors, we're talking about people who have themselves battled opioid addiction.

Carlin Rafie: Correct.

Angie Miles: Okay. Drug courts, that's a second one, right?

Carlin Rafie: Right. So, the community had been thinking about bringing a drug court for some time, that court opened this year.

Angie Miles: And drug courts ... help people to move towards treatment rather than moving towards incarceration.

Virginia

[Virginians are finding ways to combat opioid addiction](#)

Virginia Public Media

The community partners also identified establishing drug treatment courts, which channel offenders to counseling and classes rather than to jail. They were successful at opening a drug court in January of this year. Martinsville also elected to put resources into prevention programs in the schools and [toward] educating the general public about what resources are available to them to become or to remain healthy and substance-free.

Carlin Rafie, one of the Virginia Tech researchers, says Martinsville has taken the bull by the horns and that the resilience she's seen in this city is remarkable but not uncommon.

"I think this is happening in communities all over Virginia. There are many coalitions that have come together," she says. "There's a lot happening to address the issue, which gives me hope and is what we need to do in order to turn this around."