



Opioids and the Courts News: Jan. 23, 2018

National

[Opioid Hysteria Comes to Massachusetts Courts](#)

New York Times

This month, Massachusetts became the [first state to ban](#) fentanyl and carfentanil from being brought into courthouses as exhibits, out of concern that these substances are simply too dangerous to be in public places. The policy is based in part on the idea that even minuscule amounts of skin exposure to these drugs can be life-threatening. This is patently false — and we fear that it will worsen what is already a public health crisis.

This paranoia is reflected in the new Massachusetts courtroom policy, which bolsters the delusion that opioids can kill via unintended casual contact. As emergency physicians, we are concerned not just about this massive public misperception but also about its consequences to public health if emergency medical workers or other care providers are scared out of performing their normal lifesaving duties.

National

[Trump Opioid Commission's Work Is a 'Sham,' Member Says](#)

Newsweek

The work of President Donald Trump’s opioid commission has been turned into a “sham” and a “charade” by Republican-led Congress, a member of the panel said.

Trump in October declared a 90-day public health emergency around the opioid epidemic—but he did not make new funding available to address the issue.

“It means nothing if it has no funding to push it forward,” former Democratic Representative Patrick Kennedy, one of six members appointed to the bipartisan commission in March, told [CNN](#) in a report published Tuesday.

Ohio

[Drug Court receives initial Supreme Court certification](#)

The Star Beacon

The Ashtabula Municipal Drug Court may soon be one of more than 100 specialized dockets in the state.

Ashtabula Municipal Court Judge Laura DiGiacomo this week announced the Specialized Docket Section of the Ohio Supreme Court has granted “initial certification” to the court.



Opioids and the Courts News: Jan. 23, 2018

“With this initial certification, the court is authorized to fully operate its Drug Court, which will be officially referred to as Recovery Court,” DiGiacomo said. “We are very excited to accept this challenge and opportunity to combat this opioid crisis plaguing our community.”

Pennsylvania

[Opioid Intervention Court touted as first in Pennsylvania](#)

FOX43.com

A newly-established drug court in Cumberland County is being touted as the first in Pennsylvania, and one of the first of its kind in the nation.

The Opioid Intervention Court aims to beat addiction at the time of an addict’s first arrest. The voluntary program allows the person who was arrested to immediately detox and enter a recovery program.

Judge Jessica Brewbaker with the Cumberland County Court of Common Pleas presides over the program, which operates in partnership with the RASE Project. As Brewbaker explains, the intervention court is designed to be more advanced than other drug courts already in existence.

Tennessee

[Gov. Haslam proposes \\$30 million plan to combat Tennessee's opioid epidemic](#)

Chattanooga Times Free Press

Gov. Bill Haslam and legislative leaders outlined a \$30 million plan Monday to attack Tennessee's opioid epidemic with calls for new limits on painkiller prescriptions, more educational outreach to students, boosting availability of addiction treatment and the use of 512 prison beds to help hundreds of state prisoners with problems.

"This epidemic knows no political boundaries," Haslam said as he was joined by top Republicans to unveil the three-pronged "TN Together" proposal. "It doesn't know political parties or race or income distinctions. It affects families all across our state."

House Speaker Beth Harwell, R-Nashville, Lt. Gov. Randy McNally, the state's Republican Senate speaker, and even state Supreme Court Justice Jeffrey Bivins joined Haslam in announcing the program.

"We will beat this crisis," the chief justice vowed.



Opioids and the Courts News: Jan. 23, 2018

Texas

[Officials tell of opioids' effect on local courts, jails](#)

Texarkana Gazette

"This just didn't happen in the past year or two. I've seen a shift from street drugs to pharmaceuticals as long as 10 years ago when I was still a prosecutor," said Carlton Jones, an Arkansas Circuit Judge who serves Miller and Lafayette counties and presides over a drug court.

"In any of the evaluations that we do to initially assess a drug court participant, 50 percent are abusing prescriptions," Jones said.

Vermont

[As Abuse And Neglect Cases Strain Vermont Courts, A New Commission Looks For Answers](#)

Vermont Public Radio

Child abuse and neglect cases are overwhelming the Family Division of the Vermont Court system, a situation that Court Administrator Patricia Gabel says, "has stretched existing resources to the breaking point."

For that reason, the state's Supreme Court has established a commission to find a way to better manage the cases.

Court officials attribute a 63 percent increase in abuse and neglect cases over a three-year period to the opioid crisis.

"It's not just the number of the cases that is increasing, it's also the complexity of cases," says Gabel.

West Virginia

[Gazette editorial: NY opioid court could hold lessons](#)

Charleston Gazette-Mail

For years, judges, police and other authorities in West Virginia have touted the state's "drug courts," where addicts convicted of minor, nonviolent offenses have a chance to get treatment instead of going to jail.

The latest good news from those courts came earlier this month, when people graduated from drug court programs in Wayne and Marion counties. Rather than sitting in jail or trying to find a job with a criminal record, each of those people already has a job, according to the West Virginia Supreme Court. Two are enrolled in college, and two work with the group Narcotics Anonymous, helping other people with addictions.



Opioids and the Courts News: Jan. 23, 2018

A judge in New York has taken things a step further, creating what he believes might be the first court dedicated solely to helping people addicted to opioids.

Wisconsin

[Assembly, Senate Approve Family Treatment Drug Court Program](#)

madison365.com

A bill that would create an infrastructure for family court to reform the way family drug cases are handled passed through the State Assembly and the State Senate and now awaits approval from Governor Scott Walker.

The bill, a bipartisan effort headed by Representative Jessie Rodriguez (R-Oak Creek) and Representative Evan Goyke (D-Milwaukee) seeks to expand on the infrastructure of the Family Drug Treatment Court, which is part of the Children's Court, to make it available in all counties.