

Opioid-Related News and the Courts

Weekly Review

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National

[Justice Department Finds that Pennsylvania Courts Discriminated Against People with Opioid Use Disorder](#)

U.S. Department of Justice

The Justice Department found that the Unified Judicial System of Pennsylvania, through the actions of its component courts, violated the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) by prohibiting or limiting the use of disability-related medication to treat Opioid Use Disorder (OUD) by individuals under court supervision. The [letter](#) of findings demands that Pennsylvania addresses the civil rights violations identified during the course of the investigation conducted by the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division and the U.S. Attorneys' Offices for the Eastern, Middle and Western Districts of Pennsylvania.

The Justice Department identified three specific individuals with OUD who had been discriminated against by the Northumberland and Jefferson County Courts of Common Pleas. Two individuals alleged that the Jefferson County Court ordered all probationers to stop using their prescribed medication for OUD. A third individual alleged that the Northumberland County Court required her to stop using her prescribed OUD medication to graduate from drug court. The department's investigation corroborated these allegations and additionally found evidence that multiple other county courts in Pennsylvania have treatment court policies that discriminate against individuals with OUD.

Pursuant to Title II of the ADA, the department provided the Pennsylvania judiciary with written notice of the supporting facts for these findings and the minimum remedial measures necessary to address them.

National

[CDC proposes softer guidance on opioid prescriptions and doctors prescribing them](#)

Associated Press

The nation's top public health agency is proposing changing — and in some instances, softening — guidelines for doctors prescribing opioid painkillers.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's previous guidance was issued six years ago. It is credited with accelerating decreases in the kind of prescribing that

ignited the worst overdose epidemic in U.S. history. But, officials say it also caused some doctors to cut off patients taking prescription painkillers too soon.

It also kept the drugs from patients who might benefit. The CDC posted a proposed update Thursday. It is intended to foster individualized care of patients.

National

[New report details the scale of the U.S. opioid crisis and its link to drug trafficking](#)

PBS News Hour

Maryland Rep. David Trone, co-chair of the federal Commission on Combating Synthetic Opioid Trafficking, joins William Brangham to discuss the opioid overdose crisis that killed more than 100,000 Americans in a year and is being called one of the most pressing national security and public health challenges facing the U.S.

William Brangham: Let's turn to the demand side, which your report addresses very specifically, that there — these drugs are coming because there is some appetite for them here in the United States.

And your report talks about the need to beef up and to ramp up proven medically assisted treatment for people suffering from addiction. But we have been making this argument as a society for years. I wonder why you think it is — we have been so slow to ramp up that treatment that we know can work.

Rep David Trone: Yes, a lot of folks are concerned about giving a drug to stop the craving for another drug.

But MAT, medically assisted treatment, it works. We have to empower more doctors and even nurses to sort of prescribe these MAT drugs. They can be a big win. And now, as COVID begins to recede, we have got to turn our attention to this, or it'll be another million deaths by 2029, according to latest poll — latest research effort from Stanford.

That's kind of scary.

Tennessee

[Judicial officials make a case for abstinence-based drug treatment](#)

Johnson City Press

Area judges and prosecutors are asking Washington County commissioners to not spend their share of settlement money from the “Baby Doe” opioid lawsuit until they hear the details of a proposed nine-county abstinence-based treatment center in Roan Mountain.

“We don’t have anything like this east of Hohenwald,” Criminal Court Judge Stacy Street told members of the county’s Health, Education and Welfare Committee on Thursday.

Street also said Washington County officials should consider holding a workshop to learn more about the inpatient program that is being backed by judicial officials from “Mountain City to Morristown.” Proponents hope to implement an intensive 12- to 16-month program that will involve 185 beds at the now-closed Northeast Correctional Complex annex in Carter County.

“We’re talking about honest-to-God treatment,” Street said, noting that the program will be modeled on the Recovery Court model now used in his and other courtrooms across the region.