

Opioid-Related News and the Courts

Weekly Review

May 19, 2023



National

[County with high rate of overdose deaths doesn't use opioid settlement funds for addiction program](#)

CNN

The debate in this Appalachian county is reverberating nationwide as state and local governments [receive billions of dollars](#) from companies that made, distributed, or sold opioid painkillers, like Johnson & Johnson, Cardinal Health, and CVS. The companies were accused of fueling the overdose epidemic, and the money is meant to remediate that harm. About \$3 billion [has already landed](#) in state, county, and city coffers, and about \$50 billion more is expected in the coming decade and beyond.

States are required to spend at least 85% of the money on opioid-related programs, but KFF Health News' [ongoing investigation](#) into how the cash is used — and misused — shows there is wide interpretation of that standard and little oversight.

National

[Strengthening the Foundation: A Look at Past, Present, and Future Research for Adult Drug Courts](#)

Center for Justice Innovation

- Drug courts are effective at reducing new criminal activity.
- Drug courts are effective at reducing illicit substance use.
- Drug courts are more cost-effective than other alternatives to incarceration or imprisonment.
- High-risk, high-need participants consistently have better outcomes than low-risk, low-need participants.
- Incorporating medications for opioid use disorder (MOUD) into treatment court programming can improve participant outcomes.
- Carefully selecting sanctions and incentives leads to better participant outcomes.
- Judges have a tremendous impact on the success of drug court participants.

National

[Treatment Court Family Nights: An Accessible and Adaptable Support for Families Engaging in Recovery](#)

Substance Abuse: Research and Treatment

Introduction: While public health measures including physical distancing and stay-at-home orders have clear benefits in COVID-19 mitigation and prevention, they have provided unique challenges for individuals with substance use disorder (SUD), including Treatment Court (TC) participants.

Methods: This study involved a qualitative evaluation of TC Family Nights; one series of Family Nights was conducted before the COVID-19 pandemic and the second series was adapted and held remotely due to COVID-19 distancing requirements.

Results: Several important themes emerged, including general positive experiences, accessible session logistics, naloxone training, attention to stigma, building recovery capital, group engagement, social interaction, and community action. These themes will help inform future SUD recovery education.

Conclusion: Online recovery support events provide a new model for courts and recovery organizations that seek multiple ways to provide connection and support for their participants and families during times when accessibility is prioritized [and] in-person activities are discouraged and in resource-sparse and geographically isolated communities.

Arizona

[Gila County's experimental opiate court getting good results](#)

Payson Roundup

Great results so far. But a long way to go.

That's the bottom line for Gila County's opiate drug court which uses the threat of jail to ensure people get treatment to stop a lethal plague – the soaring number of overdose deaths from opiates.

Superior Court Judge David Wolak reported on the results in the state's only dedicated opiate court which he has overseen since July 2021.

“We're graduating 38% of the participants. We're working to improve that graduation rate,” he said.

Louisiana

[If not us, then who: Advocating for Change to Louisiana's Drug Court Program](#)

LSU Journal for Social Justice & Policy

Part I of this comment will argue that drug court programs are the best solution to combating the opioid epidemic, as standard imprisonment ultimately does nothing to address an inmate's substance use disorder nor reduces recidivism rates. It will detail the origins of the opioid epidemic in the United States and provide information regarding its consequences across the nation and particularly in Louisiana.

Part II will highlight the common elements of state drug court programs, provide historical background regarding the development of drug court programs in America, and give an in-depth look into the structure and function of the program currently implemented in Louisiana.

Part III will be a detailed examination of the benefits and drawbacks of the Louisiana state drug court program.

Part IV of this comment will construct a theoretical, model program that has the greatest potential to efficiently produce better outcomes for individuals with substance use disorders. The model will seek to be both economically feasible and easily implemented by most of the states.

Finally, Part V will advocate that the model program be introduced in Louisiana.

North Carolina

[Bladen County commissioners approve use of opioid settlement funds for establishing adult drug court](#)

WECT

Bladen County commissioners voted to use opioid settlement money for grant writing services on a new adult drug court in collaboration with Columbus County at their meeting on Monday, May 15.

In total, \$6,250 will be used from the settlement fund for Addiction, Consulting and Training (ACT) Associates, LLC. to ask the Federal Bureau of Justice to "facilitate the planning process and establishment" of an adult drug court that would provide nonviolent offenders treatment.

Judge Scoti Ussery, a district court judge who serves in Bladen, Brunswick and Columbus counties, would be appointed to oversee the court.

Two adult drug courts already exist in southeastern North Carolina; both, however, are in Brunswick and New Hanover counties.

Tennessee

[Shelby County Drug Court and Ben Owen work to treat drug addiction in South Memphis](#)

ABC 24

When many eyes were focused on the COVID-19 pandemic over the last three years, another crisis was brewing and hitting south Memphis hard.

Deaths from opioid and other drug addictions have gone up since 2020, and local organizations along with the Shelby County Drug Court are working to get more people the treatment they need.

The Shelby County Drug Court along with Flanders Field and other organizations gave out care packages to those in south Memphis on Saturday.

