



Opioids and the Courts News: Dec. 20, 2017

National

['The Court System Shouldn't Interrupt the Treatment Process'](#)

The Atlantic

There's perhaps no case that illustrates this disconnect more clearly than one that's playing out in Massachusetts. There, the state Supreme Court is considering the appeal of 29-year-old Julie Eldred, who's contesting a trial court's decision that she violated probation by failing a mandatory drug test. She'd been under court supervision for theft for 12 days in 2016 when she tested positive for fentanyl, a powerful opiate; she subsequently spent 10 days in jail before being sent to an inpatient treatment facility.**

Eldred says that she shouldn't be punished for her inability to abstain from drugs, and that the jail time violated her constitutional protection against cruel and unusual punishment. Relapse is a symptom of her illness, she's argued, and doesn't amount to a purposeful violation of court orders. On the one hand, the top law-enforcement officer in Massachusetts would seem to agree: Attorney General Maura Healey [told](#) the Associated Press last year that "for far too long" addiction hasn't been treated like a medical condition: "I think about addiction as a disease in the same way we think about diabetes as a disease or heart disease as a disease." But in Eldred's case, that thinking hasn't influenced the state's argument: Healey's office has refined its stance to say that, in a legal setting, it's not the same thing.

Florida

[Opioid Crisis Impacting Foster Caseloads](#)

WUSF News

As the opioid epidemic swells the tide of abused and neglected children coming into the state foster-care system, a Florida judge is trying to find them a "forever" home, in time for the holidays.



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Indiana

[Guest column: The impact of opioid use on children and families](#)

Chicago Tribune

The news offers daily reminders of the complex challenges our communities, state and country face in the opioid crisis. Governor Eric Holcomb made attacking the drug epidemic a pillar of his inaugural policy agenda. Indiana University has announced its Grand Challenge to respond to the addictions crisis, committing \$50 million to finding solutions. Indiana's social service, emergency service, criminal justice, health care, and public health providers are working to respond to the relentless array of ongoing, interconnected needs arising from the crisis. Collaborations among local, state and federal agencies are developing new cross-cutting partnerships and interventions. At the Indiana Youth Institute, we are concentrating on identifying and addressing the short- and long-term consequences of the opioid crisis on Hoosier children.

Massachusetts

[Another Price of the Opioid Crisis: More Grandparents Are Raising Grandchildren](#)

WCAI

For many grandparents work options are limited, and so is income. When the state places a child, the grandparent is sometimes reimbursed for foster-care expenses. That doesn't apply to Uljua, who said she went through probate court to get custody of her grandson. When it comes to childcare costs, she's on her own.

Michigan

[Public health emergency fails to combat opioid addiction](#)

Blugold Media

For those who get arrested for opioid possession, there are special drug courts in the area set up to give people a second chance. After completing an intensive course of treatment counseling and other court appointed stipulations, opioid users are able to get the charges reduced or expunged from their record.

Falk says that not all opioid abusers are bad people, but many times the criminal behavior is fueled by a drug addiction, and removing people who want to be helped from the criminal justice system is the focus.

“The idea behind the treatment court is that some people who commit crimes, do so out of a drug habit,” Falk said. “They are compelled to get money for drugs to support their drug addiction. And the goal is to break the cycle of drug addiction and criminal behavior.”



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Michigan

[Treatment courts are one method of dealing with the opioid crisis](#)

Sault Ste. Marie Evening News

Michigan is responding to the drug abuse crisis. The Prescription Drug and Opioid Abuse Commission have made several recommendations to the Governor and are working on more suggestions. One recommendation would require that funding for state court treatment programs would be contingent on the program's certification by the State Court Administrator and that all judges operating a treatment court program be trained in addiction health.

Pennsylvania

[York County Drug Treatment Court to expand, treat only opioid cases in 2018](#)

York Daily Record/Sunday News

The York County Drug Treatment Court will be able to accept nearly twice as many people beginning Jan. 1, 2018, but only people battling an opioid addiction will be accepted into the court, according to a news release from the county.

The court will "effectively transition itself to Heroin/Opioid Treatment Court," in an effort to prioritize those cases "amid the horrific opioid epidemic in York County," according to a news release from York County sent Tuesday afternoon.

Utah

[Unintended consequences: Investigation reveals why drug court enrollment is declining](#)

Deseret News

But despite the program's effectiveness, in Utah, the number of addicts participating in drug court fell by 10 percent between 2015 and 2017, according to the state's Department of Human Services' Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health.

A Deseret News review of drug courts in all 50 states has revealed that Utah is not alone. Although the number of drug court programs across the country is on the rise, the enrollment of addicts in some states has fallen.

This is happening at a time when the nation's opioid crisis is reaching pandemic levels. Last year, 64,000 people died from opioid overdoses in the United States — that's more than the number of American lives lost in the entirety of the Vietnam War.



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Washington

[Editorial: Coordinated effort a good cure for opioid crisis](#)

HeraldNet (Everett)

Overdoses, primarily from opioids, are the leading cause of death for Americans under 50 years of age, killing about 64,000 nationwide in 2016. That's 175 deaths every day in the U.S. Snohomish County, from 2013 to 2016, saw nearly 100 overdose deaths each year.

Washington

[Opioid problem alive and growing in \[North Central Washington\]](#)

The Wenatchee World

But local law enforcement and health officials say they're seeing more overdose cases, and opioid-related crimes are on the rise. Officials are now working together to address the region's opioid problem from all angles.