



# Opioids and the Courts News: Feb. 15, 2019

## National

### [Legal Services Corporation's Opioid Task Force to Hold Field Hearing in Louisville](#)

Legal Services Corporation

#### Panel 1 – Educational Efforts of the Judiciary and the Federal Government

- Deborah Taylor Tate, *Director, Administrative Office of the Courts; Co-Chair, National Judicial Opioid Task Force*

## National

### [An Opioid Lawsuit in Oklahoma May Set the Stage for National Cases](#)

Governing

In the legal battle to hold drug companies responsible for the country's raging opioid epidemic, media attention largely has focused on a national lawsuit set for a late October trial in federal court in Cleveland, Ohio.

But it may be upstaged by a lesser-known opioid case: Oklahoma v. Purdue Pharma, scheduled for trial in May in the Cleveland County Courthouse in Norman, Oklahoma.

The Ohio case, known as the National Prescription Opiate Litigation, is a consolidated case that includes federal lawsuits brought by more than 1,500 counties, municipalities, hospitals and others, and features a brief from the U.S. Justice Department.

But attorneys general in most states have opted to file independent lawsuits against drug companies, rather than share the stage with hundreds of other cases. In total, at least 330 opioid-related cases are pending in lower courts in at least 45 states.

Oklahoma's case is slated to be the first to go to trial.

## Indiana

### [New article outlines St. Joseph County as model for fighting opioid epidemic](#)

ABC 57 News

The interventions include adding naltrexone to county jails. Naltrexone is a drug that keeps a person from feeling the effects of opioids. Other interventions include adding medication-assisted treatments in drug court, adding recovery coaches to hospital emergency rooms, keeping Narcan readily available in the community, and adding harm-reduction recovery groups, which [John Gallagher, an associate professor at IUSB and an addictions therapist] says he'd peg as the most important one.



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### New York

#### [Drug forum draws full house in Lockport](#)

Niagara Gazette

Rehabilitation centers throughout the county have expanded. Niagara Falls has started an opioid court, which is open even to those who have committed no crime.

### New York

#### [Troy starts area's first opioid court](#)

Albany Times Union

Troy City Court will become the first in the area and 14<sup>th</sup> in the state to start an opioid court, a judicial option that emphasizes treatment for nonviolent offenders struggling with addiction.

The court is modeled on one started in May 2017 in Buffalo. During that court's first 18 months, 432 people went through the program, according to the Buffalo News; two died of overdoses during that period.

Since then, similar courts have opened in Niagara Falls, the Bronx, Staten Island, Syracuse and elsewhere around the state.

### New York

#### [Countering an epidemic: Judge Craig Hannah's Opioid Court instills ...](#)

Buffalo Business First

[Craig Hannah](#) recalls his high school days on the basketball court when he guarded [Christian Laettner](#) and tried to keep the nearly 7-foot future star away from the bucket.

That was easy compared to what he faced when he battled drug addiction as a young man and now as he helps others as a judge in the Buffalo Opioid Intervention Court.

Each weekday morning, Hannah can be found counseling a bulk of the approximately 120 people who participate in the therapeutic court.

“A lot of our clients have burned just about every bridge they have to have gotten to this point,” he said. “Our job is to make sure they walk out of here a lot better than when they first [came] in.”



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### West Virginia

[Gazette editorial: Family drug court bill a win for WV](#)

Charleston Gazette-Mail

The House of Delegates is to be commended for unanimous passage last week of a bill to establish family drug courts in West Virginia. The bill was passed a week ago Wednesday. It remains to be taken up by the Senate Judiciary Committee, but citizens should remain hopeful this legislation will make it to the governor's desk to become law.

While education has been the focus of marathon debates lately, and rightly so, it's important to keep in mind the devastating impact drug overdoses and substance abuse have had on West Virginia. Opioids are a nationwide crisis, but the death toll from drug overdoses is higher in West Virginia than anywhere else in the country.

