

Opioid-Related News and the Courts

Weekly Review

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National

[\\$200M earmarked to fight US opioid crisis goes unused](#)

Chicago Tribune

It's not Purdue that is holding up the money. Instead, it's [the] lawyers representing the wide range of entities suing the company who cannot agree how best to use it. The main disagreement is between nearly 3,000 local governments and advocates for those hurt by opioids.

Advocates want the money funneled mostly to local nonprofits that provide emergency services to people with addictions.

State attorneys general say doing so would dilute the money so much it would not be effective. Because Purdue is undergoing the long process of distributing its assets, the states also see the prospect of distributing billions of dollars over time as more important than the \$200 million.

"You see the state AGs come in and block the money, and you're not understanding why," said Jill Cichowicz, who lost her twin brother to an overdose and sits on a committee advocating for victims in Purdue's bankruptcy case. "We're all baffled."

National

[Purdue Pharma Pleads Guilty to Role in Opioid Crisis as Part of Deal with Justice Dept.](#)

New York Times

Purdue Pharma pleaded guilty on Tuesday to criminal charges that it misled the federal government about sales of its blockbuster painkiller OxyContin, the prescription opioid that helped fuel a national addiction crisis. The admission brought a formal end to an extensive federal investigation that led to a multibillion-dollar settlement between the company and the Justice Department.

"The abuse and diversion of prescription opioids has contributed to a national tragedy of addiction and deaths," Jeffrey A. Rosen, the deputy attorney general, said in a statement.

"Today's convictions underscore the department's commitment to its multipronged strategy for defeating the opioid crisis."

Purdue's chairman, Steve Miller, acknowledged in a remotely conducted hearing in federal court in New Jersey that in order to meet sales goals, the company told the Drug Enforcement Administration that it had created a program to prevent OxyContin from being sold on the black market, even though it was marketing the drug to more than 100 doctors suspected of illegally prescribing OxyContin.

National[OJJDP Awards More Than \\$221 Million To Support Juvenile Justice](#)

Department of Justice

The grants include \$33.5 million to fund juvenile and family drug courts and provide services to youth impacted by the opioid crisis.

Florida[Central Florida drug OD deaths up 70% during COVID, report shows](#)

Orlando Sentinel

The analysis studied March through June, [2020] when many businesses were shuttered and social interaction limited, [and March through June] in 2019 for Orange, Seminole, Osceola, Lake and Volusia counties. It also found an unprecedented 43-percent spike in drug overdose deaths statewide in the first eight months of 2020, compared with the same time a year earlier.

The report, compiled from Florida Department of Health data and information from the state's two dozen medical examiners, shows Floridians ages 25 to 44 accounted for more than half of the overdose deaths, despite representing only a quarter of the overall population.

Minnesota[Pandemic has somber impact on Scott County Treatment Court; program looks ahead](#)

SW News Media

Scott County First Judicial District Judge Christian Wilton is one of two judges presiding over Scott County Treatment Court which serves high-risk, high-need adults dealing with addiction in efforts to improve their quality of life, reduce recidivism, and ultimately prevent overdose deaths.

Winter months are especially difficult for addicts, Wilton said, but this year, the arrival of spring brought an even more challenging season.

The pandemic halted drug testing and house visits from probation and police officers. Court appearances and other meetings were held virtually, and self-isolation — a risk behavior for those experiencing addiction — became the surest way to avoid COVID-19.

In March, the first overdose death occurred among a program participant.

“He appeared virtually on a Monday afternoon — I watched him and looked at him and talked to him at three o'clock in the afternoon,” Wilton recalled. “By the next day, the next night, he was dead.”

Minnesota

[Overdose deaths increase 31% in first half of 2020](#)

Associated Press

Drug overdose deaths in Minnesota increased 31% in the first half of 2020, compared to the same time in 2019, state health officials said Thursday.

The Minnesota Department of Health said there were 490 overdose deaths from January to June 2020 and 373 deaths during the same time last year.

The number of deaths took a sharp increase in March, largely driven by an increase in fatalities due to synthetic opioids, health officials said. About 80% of opioid-involved deaths were attributed to synthetic opioids, which are manufactured drugs that mimic the effects of natural opioids.

Rhode Island

[Groundbreaking program 'Baby Court' helps reunify families](#)

Providence Journal

It's a stubborn and troubling reality of child welfare: generations of families often end up involved with state care in a cycle passed down from one parent to the next.

Rhode Island Family Court Chief Judge Michael Forte decided four years ago that he wanted to try to interrupt that cycle. In 2017, he launched the Safe and Secure Baby Court, a specialty calendar geared toward serving young, first-time parents of infants from newborn to a year old, who may have a family history of involvement with the state Department of Children, Youth and Families.

Known colloquially as Baby Court, it's aimed at providing crucial nurturing and bonding to the little ones and, ultimately, to safely reunifying them with their biological parents.

The court draws on evidence that key mental and emotional development takes place in those beginning months and years, and that a firm foundation of bonding and nurturing leads to more stability later in life. Research has shown that separating children from their families leads to trauma that can be long-lasting, even lifelong. National studies, too, have found that infants and toddlers are most vulnerable to abuse and neglect, with 29% of maltreatment cases involving children younger than 3, according to the Casey Family Programs.

Virginia

[When drug addiction hit home, tiny Rich Creek responded](#)

Roanoke Times

Rich Creek, a rural town of less than one square mile just east of the West Virginia line, had been an advocate of its county's specialized, recovery-focused drug court program since that endeavor started about four years ago.

But the town itself had no recovery support groups within its borders that [police chief Steve] Buckland knew of. To be sure, such programs existed in neighboring communities, in a few cases a less than 10-mile drive up the highway.

Achievable if you have a car. A high hurdle if you don't.

