

Opioid-Related News and the Courts

Weekly Review

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National

[U.S. sees record high of 96,000 drug overdose deaths in 12-month period](#)

Axios

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recorded over 96,000 deaths from drug overdoses in a twelve-month period ending in March 2021, according to provisional data [released Wednesday](#).

Why it matters: It's a nearly 30% jump over the preceding 12 months and coincides with one of the deadliest periods of the COVID-19 pandemic, when stay-at-home orders radically changed daily life for most Americans.

Iowa

[Iowa launches statewide opioid treatment program to get medication in hands of addicts](#)

CBS 2 Iowa

Iowa will now launch a statewide program to make treatment for opioid use disorder available.

[Attorney General] Tom Miller says University of Iowa Hospitals & Clinics is the ideal partner.

“They will provide training throughout Iowa for doctors and practitioners to get licensed, federal authority to administer MAT [Medication-Assisted Treatment],” AG Tom Miller said Wednesday over Zoom.

The healthcare system launched a clinic using Medication-Assisted Treatment to treat opioid addiction in 2017.

MAT uses the drugs buprenorphine or methadone as medications for addiction and withdrawal.

Both are highly effective in preventing opioid overdose deaths.

Maryland

[Dan Rodricks: Will there be a ‘peace dividend’ from the end of Baltimore’s war on drugs?](#)

Baltimore Sun

Michael Collins, [Baltimore State’s Attorney Marilyn Mosby’s] policy director, says the fundamental idea of using the criminal justice system to deal with a public health crisis is misguided. Drug court, in particular, shows its limitations. “We were not getting the numbers,” Collins says of the court’s enrollment. “Simply put, the defendants would rather do the jail time than do the two years of intense probation and treatment. I think that speaks to the limitations of compulsory and coercive treatment.

“Studies show that coercive treatment does not work, especially through the criminal justice system. You really have to try and meet people where they are [through outreach]. Treatment, whether for alcohol or drugs, will work better more often than not when the person is ready.”

This does not mean an end to drug court, Collins adds, but rather an expansion of it. Defendants who commit crimes related to drug abuse — “adjacent crimes,” such as theft, burglary, robbery — should also be eligible.

Massachusetts

[As opioid crisis worsens, Ed Markey pitches 2 bills to help inmates get treatment](#)

Boston Herald

U.S. Sen. Ed Markey is proposing two pieces of legislation that he says would help inmates who are suffering from drug abuse while they’re behind bars and when they’re released back into society.

Citing a record high number of drug overdose deaths in 2020, Markey on Thursday said he’s reintroducing a bill to ensure people in the justice system have access to opioid-use disorder treatment.

Another bill would let people in custody awaiting trial to keep their federal health benefits.