



Opioids and the Courts News: October 26, 2018

National

[As Opioids Push Grandparents Into Parenting, Pennsylvania Lends a ...](#)
Governing

Assistance for grandparents who are raising grandchildren – a family dynamic that is becoming more common because of the opioid drug crisis – is officially on the way.

Two bills that passed unanimously in the Pennsylvania House and Senate and are intended to help those grandparents were signed into law Tuesday by Gov. Tom Wolf.

"We applaud the grandparents that step up for this," said Rep. Kathy Watson, a Bucks County Republican who chairs the House Children and Youth Committee. "You plan for your retirement, but nowhere do you plan to raise another family."

More than 5,600 people died in Pennsylvania of drug overdoses in 2017. Many were parents, and thousands of others who survived overdoses have had their ability to raise children compromised by addiction.

Increasingly, grandparents are being forced by the plight of their grandchildren to step back into the role of parent.

National

[US health chief says overdose deaths beginning to level off](#)
Washington Post

The number of U.S. drug overdose deaths has begun to level off after years of relentless increases driven by the opioid epidemic, health secretary Alex Azar said Tuesday, cautioning it's too soon to declare victory.

"We are so far from the end of the epidemic, but we are perhaps, at the end of the beginning," Azar said at a health care event sponsored by the Milken Institute think tank.

Confronting the opioid epidemic has been the rare issue uniting Republicans and Democrats in a politically divided nation. A bill providing major funding for treatment was passed under former President Barack Obama. More money followed earlier this year under President Donald Trump. And tomorrow, Trump is expected to sign bipartisan legislation passed this month that increases access to treatment, among other steps.



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[Trump signs opioids law at White House event](#)

CNN

President Donald Trump signed sweeping opioids legislation into law at the White House on Wednesday afternoon during an event marking "a year of action" by the administration to combat the opioid epidemic.

"Together we are going to end the scourge of drug addiction in America," Trump said during the event. "We are going to end it or we are going to at least make an extremely big dent in this terrible, terrible problem."

The bill signed includes provisions aimed at promoting research to find new drugs for pain management that will not be addictive. It also expands access to treatment for substance use disorders for Medicaid patients.

National

[Justice Department's Criminal Division Creates Appalachian Regional Prescription Opioid Strike Force to Focus on Illegal Opioid Prescriptions](#)

U.S. Department of Justice

Assistant Attorney General Brian A. Benczkowski of the Justice Department's Criminal Division today announced the formation of the Appalachian Regional Prescription Opioid Strike Force (ARPO Strike Force), a joint law enforcement effort that brings together the resources and expertise of the Health Care Fraud Unit in the Criminal Division's Fraud Section (HCF Unit), the U.S. Attorney's Offices for nine federal districts in five states, as well as law enforcement partners at the FBI, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of the Inspector General (HHS-OIG) and U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). The mission of the ARPO Strike Force is to identify and investigate health care fraud schemes in the Appalachian region and surrounding areas, and to effectively and efficiently prosecute medical professionals and others involved in the illegal prescription and distribution of opioids.



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Indiana

[Alternatives to jail time, responding to opioids crisis top issues for next ...](#)

Daily Journal

Republican Andrew Roesener and Democrat Steven Kennedy want the job of judge of Johnson County Circuit Court, which is a court that oversees serious, violent criminal cases and sentences drug dealers.

...

The top issue facing the next judge will be how the legal system responds to and tries to curb the opioid epidemic, Roesener said.

Early intervention, using evidence-based practices, is key to helping people recover and break free from crime, but that intervention should start before a suspect's criminal case is resolved, Roesener said. Such an approach will require a new model for the county.

For example, the next judge must be able to evaluate past treatments, the suspect's support system in recovery and other issues affecting the person and family. Then, the judge must make the best choice for how to respond when a suspect misses an appointment in court or with a probation officer or fails a drug test, because people recovering from opioid addiction are prone to relapsing, Roesener said. The best model will include intervening early, being consistent, collecting evidence and data and making changes when supported by the data, Roesener said.

North Carolina

[Will charging opioid dealers with murder prevent fatal overdoses? NC prosecutors hope so.](#)

News & Observer

Charging opioid suppliers with murder in fatal overdoses is increasingly common in North Carolina. No one keeps track of the total across all 100 counties, but prosecutors have brought at least 20 cases in the last two years as the state's opioid crisis worsens.

Opinions differ on whether tougher sentences can steer dealers away from drugs with a deadly history, especially the cheap, synthetic opioid fentanyl. Disagreements also abound on whether dealers need longer prison time when many are addicts themselves. But for mothers such as Patane, nothing but a murder charge could fit the crime.



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Pennsylvania

[Pair of Pa. laws aims to help grandparents, others raising kids](#)

Allentown Morning Call

Legislation designed to make it easier for grandparents and other relatives raising children because of the opioid crisis or other drug- or alcohol-related problems is taking effect in Pennsylvania.

Democratic Gov. Tom Wolf signed a pair of bills Tuesday, including a measure to provide temporary guardianship in three-month increments when parents are unable to care for their children.

It applies to grandparents, aunts and uncles, and adult siblings.

They can seek a court order for temporary guardianship if the parent is in a rehab program for drugs or alcohol, or has had emergency medical intervention for drugs or alcohol.

The other new law sets up the Kinship Caregiver Navigator Program to provide information about support and services for grandparents and others caring for children.

