



Opioids and the Courts News: Nov. 16, 2018

National

[Opioid Nation](#)

The New York Review of Books

Efforts to deal with the epidemic have been all over the map—literally. Possession of illegal drugs (and legal drugs illicitly used) is still a federal crime, and prisons are still full of people whose only crime was that. But many states, counties, and cities have begun to regard opioid addiction as a public health issue, not a police issue. They are opening centers in which people who seek help are shifted to less powerful opioids like methadone and buprenorphine (Subutex)—a method known as “medication-assisted treatment,” or MAT. Naloxone (Narcan), the antidote for an opioid overdose, is now sold over the counter in almost all states. If used immediately, it can prevent an otherwise inevitable death from a drug overdose. And drug courts, which may drop criminal charges in return for an agreement to submit to treatment and monitoring, are becoming more common.

Indiana

[Rush Elevates Judicial Team, System](#)

Bizvoice Magazine

“She [Chief Justice Loretta Rush] has incredible communications skills and is able to take very complex issues like this opioid epidemic and really see a path forward,” [Deborah Taylor Tate, court administrator in Tennessee and co-chair with Rush on the National Judicial Opioid Task Force] offers. “Chief Justice Rush has this real sense of service, not just to be the chief justice of a state court system but to use that for good.”

Maryland

[Anne Arundel County ties record for fatal opioid overdoses with 6 weeks left in 2018](#)

CapitalGazette.com

“I think we need to start using our resources on programs that help people,” [State’s Attorney Anne Colt Leitess] added, lauding the expansion of the county’s Drug Court program under current State’s Attorney Wes Adams and its creation by previous State’s Attorney Frank Weathersbee.

Michigan

[Drug addicts who commit serious crimes to get special court help](#)

MLive.com

A new probation system is being developed in Muskegon County to help rehabilitate felony offenders whose drug addictions have trapped them in the court system.



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In some cases, probationers with drug addictions and repeat violations have died while working through the system because Muskegon County does not offer specialized help for addicts, said Sandra Vanderhyde, administrator of the 14th Circuit Court.

The system focused on recovery is expected to begin in late December. It will be funded by two state and federal grants received this year, the largest of which is a nearly \$500,000 federal grant to be disbursed over the next four years.

The federal “Adult Drug Court Discretionary Grant” will be used to help treat opioid addiction among felony probationers. A \$61,409 Office of Highway Safety and Planning grant from the state will fund the rest of the program.

New Jersey

[South Jersey officials prepare for methamphetamine comeback](#)

Press of Atlantic City

Law enforcement, addiction-recovery experts and county leaders are attempting to get out in front of another drug infiltrating South Jersey: methamphetamine.

Professionals and experts are organizing training sessions this month in Atlantic and Cape May counties to make sure this old foe doesn’t spiral into an epidemic similar to the opioid crisis.

“We now have this threat of meth,” said Recovery Court Judge Mark Sandson. “It’s not brand new, but it’s coming in to Cape May and we want to jump on this problem before it becomes a catastrophe like the current epidemic. Let’s not get caught flat-footed like we did with opioids.”

South Carolina

[Giving drugs to drug addicts for recovery: Inside the growing controversy](#)

Myrtle Beach Sun News

Horry County’s drug treatment court won’t allow its participants to take the medication-assisted treatment route.

Fifteenth Judicial Solicitor Jimmy Richardson, who oversees the court, said he believes Suboxone is a good option, but he doesn’t want it “watering down” their program.

The federal government has been pushing to allow medication-assisted treatment in drug courts, Richardson said, but he worries it’s just “trading one drug for another.”



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“It works for (them),” he says, nodding toward the courtroom, where 10 graduates just walked away from a combined 45 years of prison sentences.

Wisconsin

[During sentencing, La Crosse judge talks of opioid epidemic: “This is what I’m seeing every day.”](#)

WIZM

One La Crosse judge is speaking out about the opioid epidemic.

Judge Ramona Gonzalez deals with many drug cases, including one Tuesday, when [she sentenced Mathew Docken](#) of Onalaska to jail for stealing a policeman’s gun to trade for drugs.

Gonzalez went off on the opioid problem. She said greed is leading to a spread in opioid addiction, while drug companies introduce new varieties.

“The doctors are saying, the research people are saying, ‘This is not a good thing,’” Gonzalez said. “Our FDA’s approving those drugs, to unleash another round into our communities. This is not going to get better any time soon.”

She continued, “It saddens me and we will have to figure out a way to get our young people and our old people away from these opioids that should never have been unleashed the way they were unleashed in our communities.”

