



Opioids and the Courts News: September 28, 2018

National

[Less new opioid use, more treatment offer signs of hope in national survey](#)

Behavioral Healthcare Executive

Last week's release of data from the [2017 National Survey on Drug Use and Health](#) (NSDUH) offered some hope around progress in combating the opioid crisis, with decreases in several categories of use and increases in treatment episodes for opioid use disorders.

Still, the overall numbers indicate that the nation hasn't yet turned the corner on a staggering treatment gap for individuals with substance use disorders. Moreover, a presentation of the survey results from the [U.S.] Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS's) assistant secretary for Mental Health and Substance Use, Dr. Elinore F. McCance-Katz, identified several populations about which there is growing concern, including pregnant women and youths transitioning to adulthood.

"We still have an epidemic," McCance-Katz, said in a taped video presentation released on Sept. 14.

National

[While America wages war on opioids, meth makes its comeback](#)

CNN

[In Oklahoma,] when [new laws were enacted to limit access to pseudoephedrine](#) -- an allergy drug used in making meth -- the proliferation of these mobile labs waned. After responding to a high of 431 meth labs in 2011, [Capt. Mark Wollmershauser, Jr. and the Tulsa Police Department] encountered just 19 last year.

But Wollmershauser said that didn't spell the end of Tulsa's meth problem. In fact, officials across the state say they are seizing meth that is purer, cheaper and in greater quantities than ever before, with most of it coming from south of the border. And while much of America is focused on combating the devastating impacts of opioid addiction, some states like Oklahoma are struggling to fight a new battle against an old foe.

National

[In Rare Bipartisan Accord, House and Senate Reach Compromise on ...](#)

New York Times

The House and Senate have reached agreement on a big package of measures to address the opioid epidemic. The legislation, backed by leaders of both parties, is a rare bipartisan achievement that lawmakers are eager to have in hand when they go home to campaign for the midterm elections.



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The 653-page bill contains a mix of law enforcement and public health measures, including one that aims to block deadly fentanyl from being imported through the mail and one that will allow more nurses to prescribe medication for opioid addiction. Another provision could make it easier for Medicaid recipients to get inpatient care for substance abuse over the next five years.

“While there is more work to be done, this bipartisan legislation takes an important step forward and will save lives,” a group of Republican and Democratic committee leaders said in a statement.

Georgia

[State law officials, Hall judge to discuss opioid crisis at UNG forum](#)

Gainesville Times

Five members of state and local law enforcement and the judiciary will gather Tuesday, Sept. 25, at the University of North Georgia to discuss the opioid drug problem.

UNG criminal justice department head Brent Paterline said the goal of the event is to educate people on the opioid crisis while also getting “some practitioners and policymakers together to see if there are any gaps or lessons to be learned.”

The discussion will include Georgia Attorney General Chris Carr, Georgia Bureau of Investigation Director Vernon Keenan, GBI Chief Medical Examiner Jonathan Eisenstat, Hall County Superior Court Judge Jason Deal and Georgia Department of Corrections Commissioner Greg Dozier.

Illinois

[State, local leaders meet in Elgin to discuss heroin, opioid crisis](#)

Chicago Tribune

A decade ago, a majority of cases coming through drug courts were there for cocaine charges, said Kane County Judge Marmarie Kostelny.

Now, nearly 60 percent of those who are referred to drug court are there for heroin and opiates, Kostelny said.

There are “more tools in the toolkit” to fight addiction and the opioid crisis in Illinois because of changes to state law, Lt. Gov. Evelyn Sanguinetti said. She joined Douglas O’Brien, regional director for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as well as officials from Elgin and Kane County Wednesday, touring the Renz Addiction Counseling Center in Elgin.



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In 2017, there were 67 overdose deaths in Kane County, said Coroner Rob Russell. That is up from the 27 reported in 2012, when public meetings highlighting overdose deaths from heroin and opioids were first held locally.

Kentucky

[Amid opioid crisis, Jefferson County family drug 'recovery' court is back](#)

Courier Journal

For Jefferson Family Court judges, addiction cases often have grim outcomes.

A mother and father die of drug overdoses, one after the other, before the court case to protect their children can be resolved.

A young child, improperly secured in a car seat, is injured in a crash after the mother overdoses at the wheel.

A boy is found living alone in a garage. Children as young as 10 [try] to care for younger siblings because parents are impaired. A young mother [dies] of an overdose before she can regain custody of an infant taken away because of her drug abuse.

Addiction — heroin, methamphetamine, prescription narcotics — continues to overwhelm family courts locally and statewide, taking an enormous toll on children and families, court officials say.

"It means the kids are fending for themselves when they come into court," said Tara Hagerty, chief family court judge. "The parents are not doing anything. The parents are either passed out or out somewhere."

Ohio

[Fentanyl drives Ohio's overdose deaths to record](#)

Columbus Dispatch

Fatal drug overdoses kept rising in Ohio last year to a record 4,854, a 20 percent increase over 2016's toll.

It was the eighth year in a row that drug deaths increased, according to data on unintentional drug deaths reported to the Ohio Department of Health.

County coroners logged 804 more fatal overdoses in 2017 than the 4,050 reported the previous year.

Powerful and deadly fentanyl continued to fuel Ohio's raging drug epidemic. The synthetic opioid accounted for nearly three-fourths of deaths, killing 3,431 people in 2017, 46 percent more than in the previous year.



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Pennsylvania

['Drug Court Changed My Life.' Counties Turn To Courts As One Way To Battle Opioids](#)
WPSU

Runners and walkers were cheered across the finish line at a recent charity run in South Williamsport. The goal was not only to win a half-marathon or 10K, but to raise money and awareness to counter addiction.

Among those cheering at the finish line was Dylan. He'll have been sober for two years in November.

“Drug court changed my life. It saved my life,” he said.

Pennsylvania

[Pennsylvania Supreme Court grapples with whether drug abuse during pregnancy is child abuse](#)
Philly.com

The Supreme Court of Pennsylvania on Tuesday began weighing an issue that has roiled America since the crack epidemic of the 1980s: whether women who abuse drugs during their pregnancies can be punished under state law as child abusers.

The state's high court has never addressed the matter, which is again igniting debate as the opioid crisis spawns [a new generation of babies](#) born dependent on their mothers' drugs.

Tennessee

[Tennessee's legal community came to Murfreesboro to talk opioids](#)
Murfreesboro Voice

In late August, the Tennessee Alliance for Legal Services gathered at the Embassy Suites in Murfreesboro for its 41st annual conference devoted to expanding civil legal assistance throughout the state.

The 2018 edition of Equal Justice University brought an enthusiastic crowd of legal professionals together to hear updates on efforts to increase access to justice in Tennessee and to educate themselves on a variety of topics relevant to improving legal assistance to Tennesseans in need.

Chief Justice Jeff Bivins addressed the gathering at the opening day welcome luncheon. He stressed the central importance of access to justice to the Tennessee Supreme Court.