



Opioids and the Courts News: October 18, 2019

National

[Judge summons drug company CEOs to court to discuss opioid settlement: source](#)

Reuters

The chief executives of the three largest U.S. drug distributors and a drugmaker have been summoned to appear before a federal judge to discuss a proposal to resolve thousands of lawsuits alleging they fueled the U.S. opioid crisis, a person familiar with the matter said on Thursday.

The order by U.S. District Judge Dan Polster in Cleveland, Ohio, came as distributors McKesson Corp (MCK.N), Cardinal Health Inc (CAH.N), AmerisourceBergen Corp (ABC.N) and Israel-based drugmaker Teva Pharmaceutical Industries Ltd (TEVA.TA) moved to reach a deal ahead of a trial before him that begins on Monday.

Those companies, along with Johnson & Johnson (JNJ.N), have been negotiating a settlement they value at roughly \$50 billion that would allow them to resolve 2,600 lawsuits nationally by largely states and localities, people familiar with the matter said.

All of those companies except J&J are set to be defendants in the trial before Polster, who oversees the bulk of the litigation. Polster has pushed for a deal that could “do something meaningful to abate this crisis.”

The companies have been discussing the settlement with four state attorneys general whose cases are not before Polster, sources told Reuters on Wednesday. Lawyers for the local governments say they have not decided whether to back it.

Under the proposal, McKesson, AmerisourceBergen and Cardinal Health would pay \$18 billion over 18 years and J&J would pay \$4 billion, according to two people familiar with the matter.

Teva has offered to give away medications it values at \$15 billion as part of an overall deal it values at roughly \$28 billion under which it would also provide distribution services, the people said.



Opioids and the Courts News: October 18, 2019

Alabama

[Wiregrass people fight the Opioid addiction](#)

WRGX

“80 or 90% of all our clients are in drug court in one of the counties, most of them in north Alabama,” said [Larry Kirkland, director of Herring House, a long-term residential program].

And a large percentage come here for treatment.

“[The] Opioid crisis has taken up a greater better percentage of our total number of patients admitted, about half of all admissions we do now.”

Illinois

[Opioids and a Teddy Bear: Ten Years of Drug Court](#)

Illinois Public Media

At first glance, the people inside Franklin County Municipal Court room 13C have little in common. There’s a man in cutoff jean shorts with tattooed arms. Behind him sits a younger woman with freckles who looks like she came from soccer practice.

The group is bound together by circumstance: All were addicted to opioids and got in trouble with the law.

“If you walk in my courtroom, you would see that it’s a very different environment when I do drug court,” says Judge Jodi Thomas.

Thomas presides over HART, which stands for “Helping Achieve Recovery Together.” It’s an opioid-specific program, and one of two drug recovery court dockets in Franklin County, which includes Columbus.

“I don’t sit on the bench,” she says. “I take the robe off. I sit down with the participants and I’m looking them eye-to-eye and engaging them with conversations about the work that they’re doing to better their lives.”

Kentucky

[Kentucky Gives Parents With Substance Misuse Disorders a Fresh START](#)

OZY

While [Sarah] Avery didn’t go through START herself, she is deeply immersed as a family mentor in the child welfare-based program. Founded in 2007 for the state of Kentucky’s Department for Community Based Services, the program is currently housed



Opioids and the Courts News: October 18, 2019

within the University of Kentucky College of Social Work in partnership with the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services. START, which employs nearly 75 mentors, social workers and family service supervisors, intervenes in families where the risk of child harm coexists with parental substance misuse, explains program director Erin Smead.

“Each family is partnered with a social worker and a family mentor. We get involved with the family very early in their intervention with child welfare, usually within 48 hours,” Smead says. “They’re coming to us scared, in oftentimes active addiction, and not always with a whole lot of support.”

Once START intervenes, it provides quick access to what Smead calls a “holistic assessment” of the situation, as well as treatment services for substance misuse, mental health and trauma.

START then pairs a specially trained child welfare social worker with a family mentor, an individual in long-term recovery from a substance misuse disorder. With a deep understanding of what the family is going through, the mentor acts as a guide and coach for family members.

New Hampshire

[My Turn: To solve the drug crisis, we need to focus on treatment](#)

Concord Monitor

I [Jeff Levin] have worked as a public defender in New Hampshire’s courts for almost 23 years. A large part of my caseload during that time has consisted of crimes motivated by drug addiction.

In the 1990s and early 2000s, I represented many persons addicted to cocaine, in crack and powder forms. In the early 2000s, prescription opiates turned up and soon dominated the landscape. When those became scarcer or too expensive to easily obtain, heroin, for a time, surged. Now clients are increasingly addicted to cheap, plentiful fentanyl and methamphetamine that typically arrive here from points west, and from Mexico and China.

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The drug court model is also highly effective in many counties throughout the state in our superior courts.

Other bright spots for criminal defendants around the state: the Therapeutic Community program at the Strafford County House of Corrections, one of the few comprehensive



Opioids and the Courts News: October 18, 2019

residential programs behind-the-walls; the Farnum Center, Keystone Hall, Phoenix House and Families In Transition programs; the many transitional living programs starting up around the state; and the hundreds of AA/NA self-help meetings that take place every day around the state in every community.

These programs are literal lifelines for recovering addicts and their families.

Ohio

[Cuyahoga Co. details how \\$23 million drug company settlement will be used to mitigate opioid crisis](#)

News 5 Cleveland

Cuyahoga County officials announced the first phase of the county's Opioid Crisis Mitigation Plan Thursday afternoon aimed at combating the growing opioid epidemic.

To underscore the devastating effects of opioids on public health, county officials held the news conference in front of a giant prescription pill bottle made to look like a coffin.

According to Cuyahoga County Executive Armond Budish, the county filed a lawsuit against drug makers, distributors who were "instrumental in promoting opioids for sale and distribution nationally and in Cuyahoga County."

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Budish said opioids are impacting county programs and agencies such as Children and Family Services, the Cuyahoga County court system, healthcare systems and the medical examiner's office.

For example, according to Budish, the number of children in county custody is the highest it has been in 10 years. This week, there are around 2,900 children in custody.

Children often come to into the county's custody when their parent dies from an opioid overdose. Budish says that the cost to the county to care for a single child is around \$85,000 a year. This year alone, costs rose to \$9.6 million to care for the children in the county's custody. The cost is expected to rise even higher next year.

Wisconsin

[Court of Appeals Judge Visits Manitowoc, Comments on State Drug Problem](#)

Seehafer News

Chief Judge of the Wisconsin Court of Appeals Lisa Neubauer was in Manitowoc over the weekend for a speaking engagement. SeehaferNews.com had a chance to talk with



Opioids and the Courts News: October 18, 2019

Judge Neubauer who says drugs and opioids are not only a big problem for our local Circuit Courts but are also a major concern of Wisconsin's Court of Appeals. She said she was in Kenosha earlier in the day and "The District Attorney down there was talking about how meth is now coming onto southeast Wisconsin." Meth has been a problem in other parts of the state for quite some time.

It's not all bad though, as Neubauer explained that "Courts are really responding with drug and alcohol treatment courts, trying to get people out of the cycle, trying to get people out of the criminal lifestyle, and frankly, get them the help they need for plain addiction."

