

# Opioid-Related News and the Courts

## Weekly Review

September 17, 2021



### California

#### [‘Where Did This Start?’ In Yurok Domestic Violence Program, Understanding Generational Roots of Trauma Is Key](#)

KQED

After Mark completed his program, he said he “continued to work on myself and work on myself.” But, for four more years, he “was still using meth.” In the late ‘90s, he managed to quit. Then came the opioid explosion, “when the doctors were basically giving away, just as many as you want.”

In 2010, [Yurok Judge Abby Abinanti] began to expand the Yurok tribal justice system, launching a dedicated court docket to help tribal members struggling with substance abuse. To help participants repair the harm they’ve caused, so they could heal. So the community could heal. She called it Wellness Court.

“If you look at the state and federal system, they’re very rights-based,” [Abby Abinanti, chief justice of the Yurok Tribe] said. “Our culture is very responsibility-based. And the responsibilities are interlocking in family and in community. So you have to assist people to meet their responsibility and come back into community in a good way.”

State court judges started releasing Yurok defendants to Abinanti’s court – and seeing results. So, in 2015, she decided it was time to reach more tribal members cycling through county jail. A laborious rolling cross-tally of two separate databases revealed which Yurok members were incarcerated and why. The most common offense: domestic violence.

### Florida

#### [Longtime Monroe County Judge Reflects on Her Legacy](#)

Keys Weekly

[Retired Judge Ruth Becker] was also known for her creative methods in drug court. Her clients would be assigned counseling and 12-Step meetings, and once a month they would meet her at drug court ... then go outside for a run.

“I went to drug court college in Georgetown, Washington D.C., and conferences around the country,” she said. “One of the things I learned was that with chronic substance abuse, the brain loses pleasure-enhancing brain chemicals — but not endorphins. I

encouraged them to get their bodies moving, to help them feeling better naturally. We used to go out to the Seven Mile Bridge after drug court.”

Marathon criminal defense attorney Hal Schuhmacher remembers her unorthodox drug courts very well.

“When she [sentenced] someone in drug cases, she mandated that they exercise one hour a week,” he said. “The fact that she was out there with the drug people, practicing what she preached, was a big deal to me as a defender. She cared about people to the point where she would get down in the mud with them and work on their recovery.”

The governor now has the job of appointing replacement, who will have big shoes to fill. Becker says she noticed an increase in heroin and fentanyl in her drug cases, and her appointee will have to take that on as well.

### Ohio

#### [Miami drug coalition regroups to combat rise in overdoses, deaths](#)

Dayton Daily News

“We want to get our group going again. We haven’t met in person for awhile due to the pandemic,” said Terri Becker, executive director of the Tri-County Board of Recovery and Mental Health Services. The agency serves Miami, Shelby, and Darke counties.

Several good projects came out of the coalition’s initial years of work, she said, including the Hope House, a residential detoxification program in Troy; public forums on the heroin epidemic; medically assisted treatment; the Joshua House men’s recovery home in Troy; and the Troy Quick Response Team and a similar effort in Piqua.

### Ohio

#### [Democrat Jennifer Brunner’s campaign for Ohio Supreme Court chief justice will focus on good-government reforms](#)

Cleveland Plain Dealer

Brunner’s platform for chief justice specifically calls for:

- Working to use a potential \$808 million opioid lawsuit settlement with drug companies “to advance effective court programs that provide drug and mental health treatment and counseling to criminal defendants as well as ways to benefit victims, families and the community.”

### South Carolina

#### [County opioids initiative earns state award](#)

Lancaster News

The four-phase Drug Court includes scheduled drug testing and counseling on how to avoid the behaviors and situations that trigger drug use, along with weekly meetings with a judge.

Once a person graduates from the program, all charges are dismissed. Following another year of “after-care,” those charges are expunged from the criminal record.

“I just thank these agencies for helping us and partnering with us,” [Sixth Circuit Solicitor Randy Newman] said.

### Wisconsin

#### [County treatment courts offer second chances](#)

Press Times

The Brown County Heroin Court started in 2015 to address the growing opioid epidemic the county faces, [Mark VandenHoogen, Criminal Justice Services Manager for Brown County] said.

“At the time it was the only treatment court in the United States that was focusing on the opioid population,” VandenHoogen said. “The most recent court started in 2018, and that is the OWI Treatment Court. This court was also created at the request of the county board to address the ongoing issues that our community was seeing with individuals drinking and driving.”