



Opioids and the Courts News: June 21, 2019

National

[Federal Grants ‘A Lifesaver’ In Opioid Fight, But States Still Struggle To Curb Meth](#)

Kaiser Health News

The federal government has doled out at least \$2.4 billion in state grants since 2017 to address the opioid epidemic, which killed [47,600 people in the U.S.](#) that year alone. But state officials noted that drug abuse problems seldom involve only one substance. And while local officials are grateful for the funding, the grants can be spent only on creating solutions to combat opioids, such as prescription OxyContin, heroin, and fentanyl.

Missouri

[County Circuit Court to hire treatment court commissioner to handle ...](#)

St. Louis American

The St. Louis County Circuit Court will hire a full-time treatment court commissioner to handle the growing number of cases involving non-violent defendants with substance use disorders and mental illness. The new position is the first of its kind in St. Louis County. It was included in a bill passed by the Missouri Legislature this year and signed by Gov. Mike Parson.

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Due to the sharp rise in the use of opioids and other factors, St. Louis County’s treatment courts had reached their operational limits. In 2018, 5,688 drug-related cases and 2,157 alcohol-related cases were filed in St. Louis County, according to state statistics. Additionally, the number of civil and criminal cases involving litigants with mental illness also has continued to grow, boosting the number of participants in the County’s Mental Health Treatment Court by 130 percent in the last year.

Ohio

[Community Opioid Summit Set for Friday](#)

businessjournaldaily.com

The Mahoning County Mental Health & Recovery Board and the Mahoning County Juvenile Court will host the sixth Community Opioid Summit June 21.

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Among the speakers will be Ohio Supreme Court Justice Melody Stewart and Mahoning County Judges Anthony D’Apolito, Beth Smith, and Rob Rusu. Derek Steyer of WFMJ will moderate the event.



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Ohio

[Ohio House votes to expand drug treatment options for offenders](#)

Dayton Daily News

The Ohio House voted 90-6 in favor of a criminal justice reform bill that would expand options for drug treatment rather than a conviction for offenders struggling with addiction.

The Ohio prison system incarcerates about 2,600 people for drug possession, including 1,600 for low-level amounts. The idea behind House Bill 1 is to help people deal with their addictions that drive criminal behavior.

Courts would still have discretion over which offenders would be given treatment in lieu of conviction and the option would not be available for more serious, violent or sexual crimes.

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Ohio Supreme Court Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor earlier this year called on lawmakers to expand treatment in lieu of convictions and records sealing.

Ohio Public Defender Tim Young said in testimony on the bill, "Unequivocally, the war on drugs is a failure. Opioids, meth, and cocaine continue to ravage Ohio. It is clear that Ohio will not incarcerate its way out of this crisis. We need a new approach."

Tennessee

[State to expand recovery courts with new budget](#)

NewsChannel5.com

The state plans to use increased funds in the new budget next month to expand recovery court programs across Tennessee.

There are 78 recovery courts in Tennessee, [the] majority of which are fully funded by the state. Of the recovery courts, more than half deal with people battling addiction to drugs like opioids.

The \$1.7 million increase in the budget will mostly expand capacity and add additional courts. The state estimates it would increase capacity by about 20%. Currently, there are more than 2,300 active participants in recovery court programs.