

Opioid-Related News and the Courts

Weekly Review

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National

[Op-Ed: An overdose epidemic is raging alongside the coronavirus pandemic](#)

Los Angeles Times

While Americans have focused on the COVID-19 pandemic, another epidemic has also been killing people across the country in unprecedented numbers: overdose deaths.

And the two crises aren't unconnected.

Higher levels of social isolation and instability during the pandemic have added fuel to an already serious overdose crisis. As Tracey Helton, a harm reductionist in the San Francisco Bay Area, puts it, "Everything fell apart all at one time. There is the financial stress, the mental stress ... the social connections that are lost. And there's fentanyl everywhere."

A [study](#) published last month in JAMA Psychiatry found that overdose deaths seen by emergency medical services during the height of the coronavirus restrictions were more than double the rate of the year before. Early [numbers](#) just released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention paint a similarly chilling portrait. Overall, 2020 is on track to see about 40% more overdose deaths than in other recent years.

Addiction is not unique to the United States. Yet, as a nation, we seem to be uniquely bad at preventing overdose deaths. We have, at our fingertips, a set of commonsense practices that experts agree would help reverse the climbing rates. But up to now, we've lacked the political will to implement them.

Nebraska

[Courts, counseling and education help with state's low drug-related deaths](#)

Star Herald

Federal and state grants have helped increase outreach in some areas of the state, especially in regard to opioid usage in the Panhandle, said Region 1 Behavioral Health Authority Coordinator Lisa Simmons.

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The District Six Adult Drug Court, based in Fremont, gives people in Dodge County who are facing nonviolent drug-related charges a chance to avoid incarceration. The program, which began in 2008, has around 35 participants at a time and an average graduation rate of 66%.

"The continuity of our team and the idea that we work together as a team aspect to deal with a problem is very helpful," District Judge Geoffrey Hall said.

Across its 12 judicial districts, the state serves 1,400 participants annually with its 32 problem-solving courts which range from veterans services to drug courts.

New York

[WNY's opioid epidemic featured in national documentary](#)

WIVB

Western New York's battle with opioids and drugs was featured on a national documentary Friday night.

The two-hour film, "The Forgotten Epidemic," aired Friday on MSNBC and chronicles the opioid epidemic from the very beginning.

The Erie County Opiate Epidemic Task Force is featured for its targeted approach in getting drugs off the streets.

Buffalo City Court Chief Judge Craig Hannah was also featured in the documentary.

Ohio

[Southeast Ohio agencies collaborate to fight opioid epidemic amidst pandemic](#)

Fox 28

Ohio continues to experience an uptick in drug overdose deaths, now fighting an opioid epidemic on top of the ongoing [pandemic](#). Agencies in southeast Ohio are teaming up to make recovery possible despite the challenges.

"The opioid epidemic has never really gone away. It's merged, and it's changed," says Fred Moses, a Judge for Hocking County Municipal Drug Court.

In 2020, the [opioid epidemic](#) worsened in southeast Ohio. Hocking County leaders fighting the opioid crisis say lethal drug combinations have climbed.

"We see a lot more fentanyl now, a lot more drugs mixed," says Judge Moses.