



Opioids and the Courts News: November 22, 2019

National Judicial Opioid Task Force Coverage

Indiana

[National Judicial Opioid Task Force Report: State Courts are Crucial Partners in Addiction Crisis](#)

WBIW

Tennessee

[National Judicial Opioid Task Force Report: State Courts are Crucial Partners in Addiction Crisis](#)

WGNS

Following more than two years of field hearings, cross-disciplinary partnerships and in-depth [studies] of best practices, national judicial leaders have established a comprehensive approach for judges to tackle the crisis of addiction. According to the final report of the National Judicial Opioid Task Force (NJOTF), judges must engage in individualized assessments that contain mental health and behavioral health conditions, detoxification services—including the use of medication-assisted treatment—and psychosocial services to build resilience and recovery.

“Judges must exert leadership and advocate for the availability of quality, evidence-based treatment services as the best and most effective response to the opioid epidemic,” the report concludes. The task force was co-chaired by Indiana Chief Justice Loretta H. Rush and Tennessee Director of Courts, Deborah Taylor Tate. Thirty-four state court leaders representing 24 states served on the task force.

Indiana

[Opioid Task Force says courts need treatment options to deal with addiction crisis](#)

Greensburg Daily News

Indiana

[Task Force: Treatment options needed to deal with opioid crisis](#)

Tribune Star

With 120 Americans dying every day from opioid overdoses, a national group of state court judges is recommending expanding treatment options and creating specialized courts to deal with the crisis.

The National Judicial Opioid Task Force, co-chaired by Indiana Supreme Court Chief Justice Loretta Rush, released a report Wednesday with findings from a two-year study that included recommendations on how state courts should deal with the opioid addiction epidemic.



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The study found that the daily death toll from opioids in 2018 was worse than the daily deaths from the Vietnam War. In Indiana in 2017, the last year for which data is available, there were more than 1,000 opioid deaths.

Rush chaired the task force with Deborah Taylor Tate, Tennessee's director of courts, leading 34 state court leaders from 24 states on the National Judicial Opioid Task Force.

Indiana

[National Judicial Opioid Task Force Releases Final Report](#)

WFYI

Indiana

[National Judicial Opioid Task Force Releases Final Report](#)

Indiana Public Radio

The [final report for the National Judicial Opioid Task Force](#) was released this week and includes recommendations and resources for courts responding to addiction.

The task force was formed in 2017. Indiana Chief Justice Loretta Rush co-chairs the group and says it was created in response to the growing number of court cases related to substance abuse.

“Let’s look at the addiction and treat the addiction, this revolving door that we have isn’t working,” says Rush.

Findings in the report include a lack of access to proven treatment, the impact of the opioid epidemic on families and children, the need for better support for state courts, and the creation of a framework to respond to future crises.

Rush says this includes adopting ways to help people.

“We’re responsible for the administration of justice in Indiana, and we believe this is part of it,” says Rush.



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National

[Doctors back innovative local efforts to battle opioid epidemic](#)

American Medical Association

While recognizing that opioid-epidemic reversal strategies that may work in one community may not be transferable elsewhere, successful local programs can still provide lessons and inform the development of treatment and prevention efforts in other communities, according to an AMA Board of Trustees report whose recommendations were adopted at the 2019 AMA Interim Meeting in San Diego.

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[The report concludes](#) that effective strategies and initiatives include opioid-overdose teams, needle-exchange programs, wider access to naloxone, and the establishment of drug courts that grant judges more flexibility in cases involving people arrested for an opioid-related crime.

National

[The Parents Passed a Drug Test. Should They Get Their Children Back?](#)

New York Times

Ohio counties want to reunite families that were separated because of drug use. But prioritizing that ideal has had deadly consequences.

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Ms. [Melissa] Colyer [principal of the Center for Alternative and Progressive Education] said she had resorted to reporting signs of abuse directly to the county's juvenile court.

Alan Lemons, the judge for the Scioto County Juvenile Court, said he had often sent his staff to rescue children from unsafe homes. In turn, he said the county agency had repeatedly complained to prosecutors about the court's efforts, and had rebuffed his requests to work together.

"I'm trying to do everything within my power to help," he said, "and I'm not seeing them do it."

National

[Pharmacy chains face October 2020 trial over their role in the opioid crisis](#)

Washington Post

Seeking to kick-start the sprawling nationwide opioid litigation, a federal judge on Tuesday scheduled a trial against major pharmacy chains for next October and proposed sending three other cases back to other federal courts where they originated.



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Judge Dan Aaron Polster, the Ohio federal judge in charge of the nearly 2,500 lawsuits filed against the drug industry in federal courts across the country, said he would preside over a case that pits two Ohio counties, Summit and Cuyahoga, against some of the nation's largest pharmacy chains. Those companies include CVS, Walgreens, Rite-Aid, and others. Polster set the trial for Oct. 13.

Drug manufacturers and distributors have agreed, or have been ordered, to pay hundreds of millions of dollars in multiple settlements and one verdict reached in state and federal courts this year. But pharmacy chains have so far escaped without contributing.

National

[Oklahoma judge lowers Johnson & Johnson payment in opioid verdict](#)

Washington Post

An Oklahoma judge Friday reduced the amount drugmaker Johnson & Johnson must pay for its role in that state's opioid crisis, cutting the sum to \$465 million to correct a math error he made in calculating a year's worth of cleaning up the crisis.

In August, Cleveland County District Judge Thad Balkman found the healthcare giant culpable and ordered it to pay the state \$572 million to help clean up the damage it caused.

Balkman also turned down a request from the state Friday to assess whether the drug company should make additional payments in coming years. Balkman stuck with his original decision, made Aug. 26, that the state did not present enough evidence to calculate those costs beyond the first year.

The state had claimed it would cost more than \$17 billion over 30 years to abate the impact of the drug epidemic.

Indiana

[Agencies collaborate to combat opioids](#)

Journal Gazette

Northeast Indiana's social service agencies are trying something new to reach people to help them enter treatment for opioid addiction.

Lutheran Social Services of Indiana, The Lutheran Foundation, the Fort Wayne Police Department, Parkview Health, and Purdue Fort Wayne Community Research Institute



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have launched a partnership called the Hope and Recovery Team to connect vulnerable residents with treatment opportunities and other resources.

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Parkview's peer recovery coaches usually work in the health network's emergency rooms and with expectant mothers who have a substance use disorder. Parkview's program has helped more than 500 people receive treatment. Parkview also recently hired a peer recovery coach to work with Fulton County Jail and is in the process of hiring another coach to work with Huntington Superior Court.

Massachusetts

[In New Bedford Recovery Court, there's a new name and a new judge, but the mission is the same](#)

SouthCoast Today

New Bedford Drug Court, which for nearly two decades has redirected drug users to a better life, has a new name and a new presiding judge.

The mission, though, remains the same.

The specialty court emphasizes addiction treatment, testing, and monitoring over punishment. The goal is to reduce repeat offenders by treating the addiction which may have been the source of their original crime.

It is now known as the New Bedford Recovery Court — a name change that Judge Douglas J. Darnbrough believes is more representative of the issues facing clients.

“The essence of the specialized court is in recovery,” said Darnbrough, who made the name change after hearing Ralph D. Gants, chief justice of the state Supreme Judicial Court, say at a conference that other drug courts have changed their names to recovery courts. The (Recovery) Court also has several people that have alcohol addiction issues only.



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Massachusetts

[Taunton Drug Court grads reach for the 'gold ring'](#)

Taunton Daily Gazette

Volunteer Nate Daniels of Taunton was the first recipient of what will be the drug court's annual Outstanding Service Award.

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Daniels, 38, describes himself as an entrepreneur who owns and operates his own Information Technology consulting firm. He also says he's a practicing life coach.

Being a drug court volunteer, he said, means that he makes himself available to drive program participants to rehabilitation facilities as far away as Quincy, Boston, and Weymouth.

Daniels said his best friend died of an overdose in 2017 after injecting either pure fentanyl or heroin mixed with the powerful opioid painkiller.

New Hampshire

[Carroll County celebrates 1st drug court grad](#)

Conway Daily Sun

The first ever graduate of Carroll County Drug Treatment Class was honored with a ceremony Tuesday morning at Carroll County Superior Court.

Thomas Saujon, 35, of Effingham, who has been in the program since August 2018, received congratulations from Executive Councilor Mike Cryans, Chief Justice Tina Nadeau, Carroll County Superior Court Judge Amy Ignatius and U.S. Sen. Jeanne Shaheen through her liaison Chuck Henderson.

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As time went by, he quit using marijuana and weaned himself off of a medication-assisted treatment drug for opioids called Subutex.

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Nadeau, who spearheaded the program in New Hampshire, addressed the gathering through a video monitor.

She said the goal of drug court is to address substance abuse issues without jail or prison.

"You have done a lot of work to get yourself here," Nadeau told Saujon, "but really this is just the beginning. There is a lot of work ahead of you. There's a lot required from you to stay vigilant, for you to stay engaged in your recovery process. I wish you the best of luck on that journey."



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Ohio

[‘We still have an epidemic; there are just different drugs involved’: Opioid deaths rose as prescriptions fell](#)

Cleveland.com

Those who were addicted to prescription painkillers switched faster than expected from opioid pills to more accessible and potent street drugs, authorities say.

“Are things changing? Yes,” said Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Judge Joan Synenberg, who leads the county’s Recovery Court for those with addiction and mental illness issues.

“But this crisis is not gone. People are dying daily. We still have an epidemic. There are just different drugs involved.”

