

Opioid-Related News and the Courts

Weekly Review

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National

[HHS pledges more effort, resources toward harm reduction for drug users](#)

Washington Post

Biden [campaigned on a major expansion](#) of drug-use prevention, treatment, and recovery efforts. Much of what [Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra] announced Wednesday, including harm-reduction efforts, was contained in a [statement of priorities](#) for the administration's first year released in March by the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy.

Though some officials oppose it, many experts consider harm reduction a more promising approach than [prosecution of drug users](#) or the many failed campaigns to keep drugs from [coming into the United States](#). But it is also a measure of how dire the overdose crisis has become: Fentanyl has so thoroughly infiltrated the illegal drug supply that users often cannot be sure what they are consuming, and the government must act simply to keep them alive and disease-free.

Massachusetts

[Treatment bill pitched to address opioid epidemic](#)

WWLP

The American Civil Liberties Union was among those to testify Monday in support of legislation (H 2067/S 1296) filed by Rep. Ruth Balser and Sen. John Keenan that would expand the medication-assisted treatment (MAT) pilot program that supplements counseling with opioid addiction treatment medications for people incarcerated in some county correctional facilities.

In explaining the bill, Keenan said that what had been known as MAT when the Legislature created the pilot program in a 2018 law is now known as medication for opioid use disorder (MOUD). The bill would require that MOUD be made available to every person incarcerated in state or [county] facilities in Massachusetts.



New Hampshire

[NH Senate committee boosts telehealth access for substance use disorder](#)

New Hampshire Business Review

One of Gov. Chris Sununu’s pandemic emergency orders allowed those with substance use disorder to get a prescription for medication-assisted treatment quickly via telehealth, without first waiting days or weeks to meet with a medical provider. It connected users with treatment the moment they decided to seek it, key advocates say, to success.

When the emergency order ended in June, so did that immediate access. The Senate Health and Human Services Committee voted, 4-0, Tuesday to make it permanent. The legislation will head next to the full Legislature once it reconvenes in January.

North Carolina

[NCDHHS announces new funding opportunity to prevent opioid overdoses](#)

Daily Tar Heel

The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services released a funding opportunity on Oct. 19 intended to decrease the impact of the opioid crisis on people in the criminal justice system.

The funding — which was given to the NCDHHS as an award from the U.S. Bureau of Justice Assistance — amounts to \$5.8 million. At least nine organizations across the state will receive this money as a grant through an application process.

Applications can be found on [the NCDHHS website](#), and are due Dec. 3. The anticipated performance period is from Feb. 1, 2022 to Sept. 30, 2023, according to the application.

Kody Kinsley, the NCDHHS chief deputy secretary for health who oversees the Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services, said the link between substance use and the criminal justice system is often manufactured by substance use being treated as criminal action instead of treatable disease.

Tennessee

[Overdoses, mental health issues tied to pandemic](#)

Greeneville Sun

Kenneth Bailey Jr., Greene County General Sessions and Juvenile courts judge and a member of the anti-drug coalition, said that more young adults are appearing in his courtroom.

“We’re seeing 18- to 25-year-olds by the boatload in court,” Bailey said.

Bailey said about 20 juveniles appearing in court have tested positive for meth over the last two years.

“It terrifies me when you get a 15-year-old using meth several times a week,” he said.

[Cindy Tvarde, clinical site director of Nolachuckey Mental Health] said a licensed therapist spends several hours per week at the Greene County Detention Center to provide assessment services for inmates.

Other volunteers work with defendants in court to act as liaisons with the justice system.

“A lot of the folks they are dealing with don’t understand the system,” Bailey said.

Wisconsin

[Substance abuse disorders: Wisconsin offers new model of care](#)

Fox 6 Milwaukee

“So, what we have here in WCS [Wisconsin Community Services] is that hub to work with me, identify everything that I need to really progress through recovery and to get the rest of my health issues dealt with, and then to partner with spokes, meaning other service providers, ...whether it’s housing, ...medication-assisted treatment, ... peer support,” said Karen Timberlake, Wisconsin DHS secretary-designee.

“It solves a lot of problems for us from the standpoint that a person can come to us at the health home, and we can help them to navigate to access all those systems that, quite frankly, otherwise, for an individual person who is not used to the system of navigation, can be a daunting experience,” said Clarence Johnson of Wisconsin Community Services.