

Opioid-Related Conditions and the Courts

In the News: July 17, 2020



National

[‘Cries for help.’ Drug overdoses are soaring during the coronavirus pandemic](#)

Washington Post

Nationwide, federal and local officials are reporting alarming spikes in drug overdoses — a hidden epidemic within the coronavirus pandemic. Emerging evidence suggests that the [continued isolation](#), [economic devastation](#) and disruptions to the [drug trade](#) in recent months are fueling the surge.

Because of how slowly the government collects data, it could be five to six months before [definitive numbers](#) exist on the change in overdoses during the pandemic. But data obtained by The Washington Post from a real-time tracker of drug-related emergency calls and interviews with coroners suggest that overdoses have not just increased since the pandemic began but are accelerating as it persists.

Suspected overdoses nationally — not all of them fatal — jumped [18 percent](#) in March compared with last year, 29 percent in April and 42 percent in May, according to the Overdose Detection Mapping Application Program, a federal initiative that collects data from ambulance teams, hospitals and police. In some jurisdictions, such as Milwaukee County, dispatch calls for overdoses have increased [more than 50 percent](#).

National

[Opioid overdoses have skyrocketed amid the coronavirus, but states are nevertheless slashing addiction treatment program budgets](#)

STAT

Drug overdoses have skyrocketed and demand for addiction treatment medicine has soared as the coronavirus pandemic continues. But many cash-strapped states are nevertheless slashing budgets for opioid crisis programs.

[Oregon](#) is poised to slash \$69 million from the state’s 2021 budget for behavioral health services. [Colorado](#) has already cut \$26 million from its own. [Georgia](#), [New Jersey](#), [Florida](#), and [Utah](#) have also slashed millions for future substance use disorder programs, and in [Minnesota](#), shortfalls in fees collected from pharmaceutical giants will translate into service reductions, too. Other states are paring back Medicaid funding that, nationwide, supports about [21% of the country’s spending](#) on substance use disorder programs. Though the federal government earmarked \$425 million for behavioral health in its emergency coronavirus relief package, experts say the help won’t come close to filling the hole.

The budget cuts — many spurred by state budget shortfalls wrought by the economic consequences of the coronavirus pandemic — will hit behavioral health services when they are needed most, addiction treatment advocates told STAT. At least [35 states](#) have reported increases in opioid mortality rates. Relapses, overdoses, and [the use of dangerous and unfamiliar synthetic drugs](#) are also on the rise. Treatment facilities have had to cut capacity to adhere to social distancing requirements — increasing demand for the fewer spots available and squeezing facilities' budgets at the same time.

National

[Hopes of Abating Opioid Epidemic Tempered by Overdose Deaths In 2019](#)

Associated Press

Nearly 71,000 Americans died of drug overdoses last year, a new record that predates the COVID-19 crisis, which the White House and many experts believe will drive such deaths even higher.

Preliminary numbers released Wednesday by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention show the trend is driven by fentanyl and similar synthetic opioids, which accounted for 36,500 overdose deaths. Deaths involving cocaine and methamphetamine are also rising.

With billions of dollars devoted to ending the opioid epidemic, policymakers had hoped overdose deaths would continue to decline, or at least plateau, after 2018 showed a dip for the first time in three decades.

“We got it to stall out a bit. Now we need to grab on again and not let this get away from us,” said Robert Anderson, who oversees death data for the CDC.

National

[American Society of Addiction Medicine Schedules Webinar on Individuals in Criminal Justice System](#)

American Society of Addiction Medicine

The ASAM National Practice Guideline 2020 Focused Update Webinar – Individuals in the Criminal Justice System

This webinar follows the ASAM National Practice Guideline 2020 Focused Update Fundamentals webinar which outlines the new and updated recommendations in the 2020 Focused Update of the National Practice Guideline for the Treatment of Opioid Use Disorder.

A substantial proportion of persons in prisons, jails, drug courts, probation, parole, and who are criminally-involved have opioid use disorder and related problems. The high concentration of at-risk individuals and conditions of incarceration can increase the risk of adverse consequences associated with drug use, including violence, medical and psychiatric co-morbidity, drug-related deaths, self-harm and suicide. Furthermore, treatment of OUD in CJ settings has all too often

been sub-standard. For example, when individuals are released from incarceration without OUD treatment, they are at extreme risk of relapse overdose and death. This webinar will provide an overview of the new and updated recommendations and in-depth information on treating individuals in the criminal justice system from the ASAM National Practice Guideline.

Session Information

Date: Thursday, September 3, 2020

Time: 12:00 pm ET / 11:00 am CT/ 9:00 am PT

Speaker(s): Sandra Springer, MD

