

Opioid-Related Conditions and the Courts

In the News: August 7, 2020



National

[Executive Order on Improving Rural Health and Telehealth Access](#)

Executive Office of the President

National

[Trump Administration Announces New Actions to Improve Access to Healthcare across America](#)

Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)

On Monday, August 3, President Trump signed executive orders with the goal of improving healthcare in rural America for seniors and all Americans by expanding telehealth, modernizing regulations, and reforming payments.

Specifically, the executive orders call on HHS to:

- Propose a Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) rule to extend parts of Medicare's broader coverage of telehealth beyond the end of the current public health emergency.
- Propose a payment model to improve rural healthcare through the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation.
- Launch a rural health action plan with a range of actions that different components of HHS will take to 1) build sustainable models for rural communities, 2) focus on preventing disease and mortality, 3) leverage innovation and technology, and 4) increase access to care.
- Reach a memorandum of understanding with the Federal Communications Commission and the Department of Agriculture to promote rural access to telehealth via broadband.

National

[Using Telemedicine to Treat Opioid Addiction](#)

New York Times

COVID-19 has made life much harder for people with opioid addiction. But the response to the virus has also revealed a way forward that could radically expand effective treatment and reduce overdose deaths.

Until now, getting effective treatment depended on where you lived. Forty percent of American counties — much of Appalachia, for example — have [no providers licensed to prescribe buprenorphine](#), the most successful treatment so far.

But the pandemic has made it possible to see a licensed provider from home, and that could make buprenorphine treatment available anywhere.

National

[Is Telemedicine Here to Stay?](#)

New York Times

Telemedicine is having its moment. Over the last few months, millions of people have relied on video or telephone calls to talk to their doctors. But as the pandemic moves across the United States, and eventually recedes in some places, how long will the moment last?

While patients used virtual visits to avoid overcrowded and potentially infectious doctor's offices or emergency rooms, many are returning to face-to-face appointments in cities where the threat has subsided.

And insurance payments for telehealth services, especially at full cost, may only be temporary.

Florida

[Supreme Court proclaims August 'Opioid Use Disorder Awareness Month'](#)

Florida Bar News

Opioid use disorder in the United States is so prevalent, the National Safety Council reports more people die from an accidental opioid overdose than from traffic fatalities. The National Institute on Drug Abuse earlier this year published data reflecting a surge in Florida overdose deaths involving opioids.

To raise awareness of opioid use disorder and highlight solutions pursued in the courts, Chief Justice Charles Canady issued a [proclamation](#) establishing August "as a month of awareness, training, and action regarding opioids, and treatment for opioid use disorder."

Massachusetts

[Springfield Drug Court awarded \\$2-million grant for substance abuse and mental health programs](#)

WWLP

The Massachusetts Trial Court has received two federal grants totaling \$6 million from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to provide mental and behavioral health services within the Boston Municipal Court and the Springfield Drug Court.

The Springfield Drug Court was awarded a \$2 million grant over the course of five years for a treatment program called Maintaining Independence and Sobriety through Systems Integration, Outreach, and Networking-Criminal Justice (MISSION-CJ). The program will be implemented as a collaboration between the Massachusetts Trial Court, the University of Massachusetts, the Behavioral Health Network (BHN), and state substance use and mental health authorities.

The MISSION model, currently implemented in four other specialty courts, systematically integrates case management, co-occurring disorders treatment, peer support, vocational supports, and trauma-informed care into a single, coordinated service delivery approach. The model was previously developed by UMass Medical School with SAMHSA funding to improve

coordination between the court, drug court participants, and community-based treatment providers. The goals of the grant include reducing criminal recidivism, improving mental health, and reducing substance use disorders.

New Hampshire

[New law requires opioid treatment in county jails](#)

Concord Monitor

Gov. Chris Sununu signed a bill last week that will require county correctional facilities to provide Medication-Assisted Treatment for opioid addiction in 2021.

Although data is not readily available for county correctional facilities, it is estimated that more than 50% of individuals currently incarcerated in New Hampshire state prisons have opioid use disorder, according to the Governor's Commission on Alcohol and Other Drugs.

The most effective treatment for opioid addiction involves medications like methadone, buprenorphine, and naltrexone, according to the [American Society of Addiction Medicine](#). Yet, until last week, New Hampshire County jails were not required to offer this treatment.

New York

[Poughkeepsie woman earns second chance to beat heroin addiction in Dutchess court program](#)
[heroin](#)

Poughkeepsie Journal

And he would sit with his two sisters in Dutchess County Court eight months later. Sprague said her children cried as she stood before Dutchess County Judge Peter Forman. She was offered the option to enter the Dutchess County Judicial Diversion treatment program. If successful, she could avoid a prison sentence.

This option was offered a couple of times, but Sprague said she declined and sat in jail instead. She said she was in a routine and didn't care if she went to prison. But her children gave her an ultimatum: Do the program or they were done. Today, she said she has a relationship with her kids, ages 21, 27 and 32.

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At the age of 12, Sprague said she started drinking alcohol and smoking marijuana. She grew up in Carmel and said her life was unstable between living in abandoned homes.

She would eventually do harder drugs like cocaine. But 14 years ago, she was involved in a car crash. Her doctor would prescribe her opioids, and she took them for nine years until their effect wore off.

North Carolina

[County applies for opioid program](#)

Mount Airy News

“Unfortunately, we haven’t done a good job in seizing all the opportunities,” when it comes to coordinating with law enforcement and the court system, [Mark Willis, substance abuse response director] said.

He has spoken previously about the idea of a drug court; rather than an addict going to prison for drug possession, the person could be evaluated to see if he or she could be eligible for alternative ruling from a judge.

“We don’t screen for nor treat substance use disorder in the detention center,” he said.

Tennessee

[Recovery Courts Statewide Adjust to Pandemic](#)

Greeneville Sun

Tennessee’s many recovery courts play a critical role in reducing recidivism and improving the lives of those with substance use disorders in the state. These intensive court programs give repeat offenders a chance to break the cycle of their addiction and become productive members of society through the application of evidence-based treatment techniques and a ‘hands-on’ approach from court staff and program partners.

Virginia

[Carroll: Drug courts are defeating the disease of addiction in Southwest Virginia](#)

Roanoke Times

Jim Carroll is the Director of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy

In Southwest Virginia, the drug court model is changing lives through the Montgomery County Adult Drug Court program. Led by Judge Bobby Turk and New River Valley Community Services, the Montgomery County drug court was launched in May of 2017 and has had 37 participants.

As an alternative to jail, participants undergo evidence-based treatment that can include medication, performing community service, maintaining employment, and meeting regularly with Judge Turk, law enforcement, and the drug court team to report on their progress. For many of the men and women enrolled, the drug court structure and compassion of Judge Turk and his team have served as a turning point in their battle with addiction and the beginning of a new way to live.