

# Opioid-Related News and the Courts

## Weekly Review

December 16, 2022



### National

#### [FDA fast-tracks review of over-the-counter opioid drug](#)

Axios

A nasal spray for reversing opioid overdoses could become available over the counter as early as next March after the Food and Drug Administration gave it priority review.

Advocacy groups, medical associations and federal agencies have said expanding the availability of naloxone is critical to addressing the addiction epidemic that killed more than 100,000 Americans last year.

The FDA fast-tracked the application from Emergent BioSolutions — the maker of Narcan — for a non-prescription version of naloxone, the company announced on Tuesday. If approved, the spray would become the first naloxone product on the market that wouldn't require a doctor's sign-off, though most states already have access laws to bypass the requirement.

### National

#### [The Rural Opioid Initiative Consortium Description: Providing Evidence to Understand the Fourth Wave of the Opioid Crisis](#)

Addiction Science & Clinical Practice

#### Methods

The Rural Opioid Initiative (ROI) is a two-phase project to collect and harmonize quantitative and qualitative data and develop tailored interventions to address rural opioid use. The baseline quantitative survey data from people who use drugs (PWUD) characterizes the current opioid epidemic (2018–2020) in eight geographically diverse regions.

#### Results

Among 3,084 PWUD, 92% reported ever injecting drugs, 86% reported using opioids (most often heroin) and 74% reported using methamphetamine to get high in the past 30 days; 53% experienced homelessness in the prior 6 months; and 49% had ever overdosed. Syringe service program use varied by region and 53% had ever received an overdose kit or naloxone prescription. Less than half (48%) ever received medication for opioid use disorder (MOUD).



### National

#### [Finally, a much-needed glimmer of hope for the opioid crisis](#)

The Hill

Amid the torrent of bad news stories, some good news has started to emerge. Last month, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control [released](#) provisional data indicating a small decline in drug overdose deaths over a three-month period. The progress has been uneven, with some states recording continued increases in overdose deaths. However, even a modest decrease in the overall death rate is cause for optimism.

At nearly the same time, a research team led by the University of Houston [published](#) the preliminary results of a new opioid vaccine designed to help those suffering from opioid use disorder. The vaccine works by blocking [the] opioid's ability to enter the brain, thus eliminating the drug's "high," and has proven effective in mice. Clinical trials in humans are expected in the coming months.

### National

#### [A healthier path out of prison leads to safer communities](#)

The Hill

The proposal would also help address the elevated risk of fatal overdoses among those leaving incarceration. Data indicate that during the first two weeks following discharge from prison, the risk of death from overdose is [12.7 times](#) that of the general population. While the details of state Medicaid programs vary, all of them [cover treatment for substance use disorders](#), including counseling and some forms of medically-assisted treatment, such as naltrexone and buprenorphine.

### Ohio

#### [Durkin's Drug Court Celebrates 25 Years](#)

Business Journal Daily

"Judge Durkin is not afraid to put in the work on the frontend to save lives and, as a result, to save taxpayers money," O'Connor said. "He has compassion, and he has good sense. When people wind up in the courtroom, they are at their lowest moments. They are in most need of respect, of humanity, and of compassion."

She urged those involved in the drug court to be an ambassador and make certain everyone in the community is aware of its successes in helping to treat those with substance abuse disorder.

Durkin said he was humbled that O'Connor attended the 25-year commemoration. Aside from being the first woman to be elected chief justice on the Ohio Supreme Court, O'Connor has been a pioneer and advocate for specialized drug court dockets. Additionally, Durkin credited her with starting the Regional Judicial Opioid Initiative (RJOI) in 2016.

### Virginia

[Explainer: What can, and can't, Isle of Wight do with its opioid settlement money?](#)

The Tidewater News

Isle of Wight already partners with Suffolk to fund a regional “drug court” which moves nonviolent offenses committed by addicted people to a separate docket from regular criminal court. Chief Judge Carl Eason Jr. estimated to the Suffolk News-Herald in 2021 that around 70% of cases coming through the Fifth Judicial Circuit – which encompasses Isle of Wight, Suffolk, Franklin, and Southampton – involve drugs, even if they aren’t directly connected to a drug-related crime.

In December of that year, the Fifth Circuit reestablished its drug court. According to the News-Herald, a drug court had previously served Suffolk from about 2004 to 2008 but ended due to lack of funding. Roughly three years ago, public defender Elisabeth Culpepper proposed the idea of restarting Suffolk’s drug court. In 2020, the state’s Drug Treatment Court Advisory Committee gave the drug court its unanimous approval.