

Opioid-Related News and the Courts

Weekly Review

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National

[12 Americans Die of an Overdose Every Hour. We Have the Knowledge to Prevent That.](#)

New York Times

In June of 2012 — the year before Harris Marquesano died — the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University published a damning critique of the addiction treatment system. It was actually a “nonsystem,” the authors wrote, as primitive and dysfunctional as the rest of health care had been in the 1900s. The risk factors for addiction were well understood by 2012, and some promising treatments had emerged. It was clear, for example, that anti-addiction medications could nudge people into long-term sobriety, especially when combined with talk therapy. But most doctors had not been trained to make use of that information, and a large majority of people who suffered from substance use disorders were still not receiving any care at all. For those who were, that care was haphazard at best, more likely to be ordered by a judge than by a doctor or therapist, not bound to any standards of quality or professionalism and rarely based on evidence about what worked and what didn’t.

Arizona

[Navajo County launches new effort to reduce overdose deaths](#)

Payson Roundup

The program gives the county the ability to offer people arrested for low level drug offenses a choice between going to jail and getting treatment.

The county was well positioned to grab the grant because it has been working for the past year on the closely related effort to divert people with chronic or acute mental illness out of the criminal justice system. People with diagnosable mental illness account for somewhere between 25% and 50% of the people in the criminal justice system — and often those conditions are compounded by drug abuse or addiction.

The program will divert people into treatment programs with frequent drug testing for 90 days — then bring them back into court to determine whether to dismiss charges, continue treatment, go on probation or return to court.

The grant will pay for two new county funded positions to administer the system at a cost of about \$150,000 a year. State agencies like AHCCCS will pay the cost of drug treatment and medical care. Two New York based NACP workers will also support the program at a cost of \$360,000 over three years. The system has not yet been tried in a rural area, so it's both experimental and a possible national model.

Michigan

[Saginaw judge offers hope, encouragement to woman who dumped overdose victim's body in creek](#)

MLive

When a Burt woman dumped an overdose victim's body in a rural Saginaw County creek three years ago, the driving force was her own drug dependency. Now, the judge who described the impetus behind her crime as such has given her the opportunity to put her addiction behind her.

Laura Jo Schempf, 47, on Wednesday, June 22, appeared before Saginaw County Circuit Judge Andre R. Borrello for sentencing, having pleaded guilty in May to concealing the death of an individual. The charge is normally punishable by up to five years in prison, but Schempf pleaded as a habitual offender, thereby increasing the potential maximum sentence to seven and a half years....

"Quite frankly, as serious as this offense was ... the root of the problem is your substance abuse disorder," the judge told Schempf, standing before him in an orange jail-issued jumpsuit. "I don't know how the public looks at it all the time — we all have our feelings about crime, punishment, and deterrents — but the bottom line to me is, as I often said, if you don't get help and get on the road to recovery, then it's a double loss," [said Saginaw County Circuit Judge Andre R. Borrello to the defendant.]

Borrello sentenced Schempf to three years of probation and gave her credit for 369 days already served in jail. He also ordered her to complete the county's [Adult Felony Drug Treatment Court](#).