

Opioids and the Courts

In the News: March 6, 2020



New Jersey

Sheriff Goes to MAT for Addicted Inmates

Cape May County Herald

[Sheriff Robert Nolan] talked to Superior Court Judge Mark Sandson, who oversaw Drug Court, and listened as the jurist recounted the problems addicts faced once they were in the court system. Cape May County's Drug Court is [presently] presided over by Judge John Rauh.

Among items at the top of Sandson's list was transportation to rehabilitation centers, most of them located in North Jersey. Often, when a bed would become available for a county addict, time was limited to get that person to the facility before it was filled [by] someone else.

Nolan said he then asked freeholders, who control the Sheriff's Office budget, for additional personnel for those transports. The board agreed, said Nolan.

"We're losing young kids, and nobody's immune. Every family I knew, every friend, every relative had somebody in their circle that had lost someone, so I committed to him (Sandson) to do everything I could to support the drug court program," Nolan said.

Nolan pointed to four people he knew who went through the drug court system, and "became successful citizens, working jobs, and contributing to society and being proud of themselves."

New Jersey

Battling the opioid crisis in Middlesex County

CentralJersey.com

The second [Operation Helping Hand] OHH grant is a Municipal Drug Court program. The court administrators from Woodbridge, North Brunswick, and now New Brunswick are compiling a list of drug-related charges and scheduling them for one drug court session per month in each of those towns, according to the statement. On those specific court dates, defendants are initially greeted by an officer, then screened by a recovery coach, and ultimately offered treatment. The defendant then has the opportunity to accept treatment while their case is deferred for a period of time until the treatment is undertaken, according to the statement.

Recently, [Acting Middlesex County Prosecutor Christopher L.C.] Kuberiet forwarded a letter to the municipal court prosecutors in New Brunswick and North Brunswick to outline the terms and conditions of the operation of a Municipal Drug Court Program in those jurisdictions. Those terms and conditions simply replicated what was taking place in Woodbridge, according to the statement. Kuberiet gave full discretion to municipal court prosecutors to dispose of matters

pending against those offenders suffering from the disease of addiction at they see fit, according to the statement. Those disposition options can range from an outright dismissal to a significant downgrade and/or amendment of the original charges.

Oklahoma

[Tulsa jail's opioid detox program a life-saver for addicts: 'That's why I feel so blessed'](#)

Tulsa World

An unintended side-effect of State Question 780 — which reclassified several drug crimes as misdemeanors rather than felonies — led to a significant contingent of people arrested for drug possession who don't qualify for drug court, according to several people who help operate the program.

State law mandates a drug crime be a felony to enter into the diversionary program that provides treatment, which [Tulsa County Sheriff Vic] Regalado estimates could disqualify a few thousand people here in a given year.

To help plug that treatment gap after SQ 780 took effect July 2017, a new court docket has been created: Misdemeanors in Need of Treatment — or MINT.

The pilot docket rolled out in December through [Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services].

Wisconsin

[Judge Martens discusses drug court](#)

GMToday.com

The social and economic costs of the opioid crisis are too immense to ignore, Circuit Court Judge Todd Martens said, which is why he decided to be the presiding judge over Washington County's drug court cases. While it will not completely solve the problem, he said, having an alternative route through court should help.

"When people aren't on drugs, they take care of their kids, they are employed and pay their bills, they don't steal from their family," Martens said. "Those negative collateral consequences of drug addiction go away when a person gets better, so that's what we're trying to help them do."

The two pillars of drug court are increasing access to treatment and holding offenders accountable, he said, so while he cannot ignore the crimes committed, he can take a different approach.

In comparison to traditional cases in Washington County Circuit Court, Martens said those cases in drug court require him to use motivational interviewing techniques.

"For example, if someone has been sober for a month, I would ask them how their life has improved in that time and have a conversation about that," he said.