



## Opioids and the Courts News: August 24, 2018

### National

[Bleak New Estimates in Drug Epidemic: A Record 72,000 Overdose Deaths in 2017](#)

New York Times

Drug overdoses killed about 72,000 Americans last year, a record number that reflects a rise of around 10 percent, according to new preliminary [estimates](#) from the Centers for Disease Control. The death toll is higher than the peak yearly death totals from [H.I.V.](#), [car crashes](#) or [gun deaths](#).

Analysts pointed to two major reasons for the increase: A growing number of Americans are using opioids, and drugs are becoming more deadly. It is the second factor that most likely explains the bulk of the increased number of overdoses last year.

### National

[Dispatches From A 'Dopesick' America](#)

NPR

*Dopesick* explores the lives of young heroin users and their long-suffering parents, and takes an intimate look at drug dealers and the cops, judges, doctors and health activists struggling to fight the epidemic. [Beth] Macy also details the actions of executives of a pharmaceutical company that aggressively marketed opioids. Many users became addicted to drugs such as OxyContin when the medications were prescribed for pain, and moved to heroin when it became harder to get more pills.

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MACY: Yeah. Yeah. There's a drug court judge out in rural Russell County, not far from Lee. I watched his hair turn from salt and pepper to white in the course of about a year. And people come up to him at the grocery store. And they have kids who are addicted but haven't been charged. And they beg him. Judge Moore (ph), please put my child in drug court, you know, before they even have charges. Of course, he can't do that. But there's just so much desperation out there.

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MACY: I mean, yeah, that's the first time we've had them going down in some regions. But overall, we lost 72,000 people last year, up 10 percent from the year before. And every one of those 72,000 people and their family members and their friends - that's a tragedy. This is an unprecedented level of a drug epidemic. And we really need a comprehensive model to mitigate it. And I just don't see any leadership coming. Our police chief just came out against syringe exchange in Roanoke. Our drug courts don't allow the use of medication-assisted therapies. Some do, but most of the ones of Virginia do not.





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DAVIES: You know, you said that judges who have drug courts in Virginia - and these are courts where people who have addiction problems can get, you know, treatment as an alternative to incarceration - that the judges in those drug courts didn't like the idea of medication-assisted therapy. They didn't want Suboxone or other stuff. And as a result, they've been less effective than they might have been. Is that changing? Are the - are judges and law enforcement more open to it now?

MACY: I think it's starting to change. Judge Moore, who is not against having MAT in his court - medication-assisted therapy - his prosecutor was against it, but now the prosecutor is starting to allow Vivitrol, which is a shot. You know, you take it once a month. It's something that's controllable, so law enforcement's a little more comfortable with it. Experts believe buprenorphine and methadone are actually more efficacious. But let's start making inroads where we can.

### National

#### [IAIABC Releases Opioid Policy Inventory](#)

BioSpace

States that have taken a multifaceted approach in responding to the opioid epidemic have realized a positive impact, according to a new report released today by the [International Association of Industrial Accident Boards and Commissions] at the WCI conference. The report, Opioid Policy Inventory, includes findings from a survey in which 33 states participated and can be downloaded at <http://www.iaiaabc.org/opioid-policy>.

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The Opioid Inventory Report highlights 23 strategies being used by 33 states. Every state in the report has implemented at least five strategies to address opioids, including prescription drug monitoring programs, community outreach programs and drug courts. Other popular approaches include expanding access to Naloxone, adopting Good Samaritan Laws and promoting take-back days. Those specific to workers' compensation include utilization review, ex-parte communication, weaning regimens, and treatment guidelines.



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## National

['None of these people ever gave up on me': America's drug courts](#)

Financial Times

Visit any courtroom in America — from rural Ohio to urban Chicago — and it's easy to count the costs of the crisis, in the currency of broken families, ruined homes and childhoods doomed by adult drug abuse.

The economic cost has been crippling too: opioids have robbed the American workforce of its biggest chunk of labor since the Spanish flu epidemic in the early 20th century, some analysts say. But, increasingly, a number of specialist courts are also counting success stories: families reunited, jobs regained, proof that there can be a life after opioids. The truth is that sometimes addicts do recover — and one of the best ways to do so, say addiction experts, is to end up in drug court.

## Illinois

[New Laws Boost Treatment of Opioid Abuse, Mental Health Access](#)

Chicago Tonight

Among other things, the bill ensures that insurance companies do not exclude prescription coverage and related support services to those with court-ordered addiction treatments programs. "These medications are a critical component in the state's efforts to combat the opioid crisis and get people, including those who are ordered by the court to seek treatment, the help they need," Hammer said. "This isn't just about rules and regulations, it's about not giving up on people."

## Indiana

[Indiana Commission to Combat Drug Abuse launches Naloxone Administration Heat Map](#)

WSVX

Today, the Indiana Commission to Combat Drug Abuse launched an interactive, online Naloxone Administration Heat Map, providing insight into the location of incidents where naloxone was administered and reported by emergency medical services (EMS) providers throughout the state.

Also known by the brand name Narcan<sup>®</sup>, naloxone blocks the effects of an opioid overdose and can save the life of the patient. After they administer naloxone, Indiana EMS providers report to the Indiana Department of Homeland Security (IDHS) the locations of incidents when an overdose situation is presumed.



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### Maryland

[Washington County Circuit judge hopes drug court can 'break the cycle'](#)

Herald-Mail Media

Many approaches have been tried to stem the tide of the opioid crisis swamping prisons and courts across the nation and claiming tens of thousands of lives each year.

In 2019, Washington County Circuit Court is expecting to add another tool to its toolbox for dealing with addiction-driven crime.

"Drug court is the next best hope to fight the heroin epidemic," Washington County Circuit Judge Brett R. Wilson said. "It's for high-risk, high-substance-abuse people in the criminal milieu whose behavior is linked to their addiction."

### New York

[Rochester drug court amid opioid crisis: "It's overwhelming"](#)

13WHAM-TV

When Rochester's drug court diversion program opened 23 years ago, there were only five other similar programs in the country and none in New York State. This court has long dealt with addictive drugs but seldom with drugs as deadly as what is being consumed in this opioid epidemic.

The harshest drugs laced with fentanyl hit the streets in batches.

"They hear people are dying from it and they think, 'This must be the good stuff.' It's scary that people see this but still use," said [Rochester City Court Judge Jack] Elliott.