



Opioids and the Courts News: November 1, 2019

National

[White House launches website aimed at addiction treatment](#)

Associated Press

The Trump administration has unveiled a website aimed at helping millions of Americans with substance abuse issues learn about and locate treatment options.

FindTreatment.gov is the latest development in the administration's effort to address the nation's opioid crisis. The White House said it believes the site, which went up Wednesday, will enable the tens of millions of Americans with a variety of substance abuse and mental health issues to better access the care they need.

Kellyanne Conway, the counselor to President Donald Trump who is leading the White House response to the drug crisis, said the site is designed to provide "connectivity" between treatment providers and those who need help.

FindTreatment.gov modernizes an obscure directory of 13,000 licensed treatment providers maintained by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, adding user-friendly search criteria and tools. For instance, it will now allow users to search based on the type of treatment sought – such as inpatient, detox or telemedicine – by payment option and whether the treatment is medication-assisted.

National

[Letter to the Editor-Drug court diversion is of great help in the opioid crisis](#)

Washington Post

I started experimenting with opioids when I was 12. By 21, I was facing 20 years in prison for burglaries committed to support my addiction. I'd still be locked up if I weren't offered the opportunity for treatment and recovery in the Boone/Lincoln County drug court. It saved my life. I now have a master's degree in social work and serve as program coordinator for a new family-focused substance use disorder program at Boone Memorial Hospital called Brighter Futures Substance & Mental Health Treatment. I am mom to a beautiful 7-month-old healthy baby boy.

Boone County launched its first family treatment court, which provides treatment for parents struggling with addiction and trauma. (I serve on the board overseeing the program.) Our family treatment court will help heal my community by providing services to keep families together instead of placing children in foster care. I am filled with hope for my community and work to give back to those who are struggling.

Addiction tears families apart, but recovery can restore the opportunity for a bright future.





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Indiana

[Indiana State Museum to open new exhibit on opioid crisis](#)

Times Herald

The United States is in the middle of a crisis that is impacting our families and communities, with Indiana at the epicenter: opioid use disorder.

This February, the Indiana State Museum plans to talk about it.

A new exhibit that has been in the works for more than two years – “FIX: Heartbreak and Hope Inside Our Opioid Crisis” – will be at the museum from Feb. 1, 2020 through Feb. 7, 2021. Working with more than 50 community partners from around the state, the exhibit will explore the many faces of this crisis that affects all Hoosiers.

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“We cannot hide from the numbers that show the depth of the addiction problem in our state,” said Chief Justice Loretta H. Rush, who also serves as co-chair of the National Judicial Opioid Task Force. “We must face them with courage and consider the humanity behind the numbers. The devastating addiction statistics are real people: our family members, our colleagues, our neighbors, and our friends.”

Indiana

[Justice System Needs More Clarity On Addiction Treatments, Says Drug Abuse Symposium](#)

Indiana Public Broadcasting

In Indiana, the criminal justice system is the primary referral source for addiction treatment. And that’s a problem, according to Indiana Chief Justice Loretta Rush.

Rush spoke at the state’s annual Drug Abuse Symposium in Indianapolis, now in its 10th year, hosted by the Indiana Attorney General’s Office.

“I think we’re really late to the game dealing with a model for the court systems on addiction,” says Rush.

This lack of structure has affected every part of the legal system including child welfare and eviction cases.

Rush serves on the National Judicial Opioid Task Force and works to create better systems to address substance abuse. She says legal professionals need to be trained on everything from trauma to medication assisted treatment.



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“If you’re going to be ordering services and treatment, you need – as a judge – to understand it,” Rush says.

She says the epidemic has shined a light on systemic gaps.

“This crisis causes us to meld the law and medicine together and where do we go to get the best information,” says Rush.

Rush says there are resources and funds for counties to set up systems to address the addiction crisis.

A new medical legal addiction guide will be finalized before the end of the year. There is also state funding for counties through justice partners addictions response training.

New York

[Do Opioid Intervention Courts work? UB study will provide the answer](#)

SUNY – Buffalo

The nation’s first Opioid Intervention Court (OIC) was established in Buffalo in 2017 after – in a single week – three traditional drug treatment court defendants fatally overdosed on opioids before their second court appearance.

OIC aims to prevent such tragedies by offering medication assisted treatment to nonviolent offenders with opioid use disorder within hours of their arrest.

The purpose of the court could not be simpler: to keep people alive by getting them treatment. It is certainly one of the reasons behind the decline in opioid-related deaths in Erie County, with 186 deaths confirmed in 2018, compared to 251 in 2017 and 301 in 2016.

The court has attracted major national media attention and has become a model for a number of similar efforts in settings like Pennsylvania’s Cumberland County Opioid Intervention Court and Arizona’s Gila County Opioid Court.

While the court, in which University at Buffalo researchers from the Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences have been engaged since its inception, has clearly had an impact, policymakers and providers want evidence to show that the unique legal, social, and psychological assistance the court provides contributes to positive results.

Starting this month, UB researchers, including those from the university’s School of Public Health and Health Professions, are working to provide just that.



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With funding from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, they have begun a scientifically rigorous study to evaluate the OIC's strategy and compare in various ways the outcomes of OIC participants with a group of participants enrolled in traditional drug treatment court.

Nevada

[Doctor who distributed fentanyl to Henderson judge loses license](#)

Las Vegas Review-Journal

The Nevada State Board of Medical Examiners has revoked the license of a Las Vegas doctor who gave opioids to a Henderson judge who later fatally overdosed.

The medical board revoked the license of Dr. Steven Holper in September.

In July, Holper, a pain management doctor, was sentenced in federal court to 41 months in prison after pleading guilty to a single count of illegally distributing a controlled substance.

Holper told the court that for 20 years he had treated and been friends with the late Henderson Municipal Judge Diana Hampton, who died in March 2016. The Clark County coroner's office ruled that the cause of death was an infection, but said that fentanyl intoxication was a contributing factor.

Oregon

[‘We’re setting them up for failure’](#)

Mail Tribune

The lack of jail space already is threatening programs with a proven track court, including Recovery Opportunity Court.

“We know drug courts work and they lower recidivism. Individuals who are successful and graduate would almost all say they spent a long stint in jail. The reality is there isn't enough space to hold individuals,” said Jackson County Circuit Court Judge Kelly Ravassipour, who oversees Recovery Opportunity Court.

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Jail Commander Lt. Josh Aldrich said many newly lodged people panic and desperately want out of jail, but some want to stay.

“I've had several people tell me, ‘Don't release me from jail. Help me get into a program that's going to help in the community,’” Aldrich said.



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New inmates are asked about their medical issues, including addiction. Those who use opioids, including heroin and prescription pain pills such as oxycodone, often face withdrawal symptoms when they lose access to drugs.

The jail staff can provide medication to ease withdrawal symptoms, including vomiting, nausea, diarrhea and body aches.

In the next few months, Jackson County and community partners plan to launch a new treatment program in jail that will provide long-term medication to ease withdrawal symptoms and curb drug cravings. Inmates will also get counseling and be connected to doctors and treatment centers in the community who will help once they're released.

Medication-assisted treatment – which is becoming increasingly available out in the community – will launch in jail with four beds for women and four beds for men. Inmates in treatment need to be isolated from the general jail population, not placed in dorms with dozens of other people, Aldrich said.

Pennsylvania

[Guest Column: Effective treatment offers beacon of hope in battle against addiction](#)

Berks-Mont

Lancaster County has become a national leader in prosecuting criminals who profit from the misery of others, and cases involving addiction are being diverted to special courts to help more patients get the treatment they so desperately need.

The entire health care community is rallying around the cause and exploring new ways to identify and treat individuals who are at the greatest risk of suffering an overdose.

Our first responders remain vigilant, equipped with the proper training, equipment, and overdose reversal medications to save lives.

Each of these developments is important in their own right, but taken together, they represent a powerful force for good against the evils of drug abuse and addiction.

This crisis did not develop overnight. Its creation was spurred by a perfect storm of easy availability, misinformation, and criminal enterprise in order to reach the horrible toll we see today.

Only through the cooperation of all stakeholders – prescribers, patients, treatment professionals, law enforcement, first responders, advocates, elected officials, and the court system – can we reverse these trends and rescue more of our families, friends, and neighbors from the clutches of addiction.



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Virginia

[Retiring Judge Parker always “tried to get it right”](#)

Fauquier Now

Drug and drug-related cases made up about two-thirds of his docket, [Circuit Court Judge Jeffrey W.] Parker said.

Over the years, the “biggest change is the type of drugs,” he said. “It used to be the most serious drug you’d see was crack cocaine. Now you see the opiates, and they seem to drive so many of the property crimes we see on a regular basis.”

Illegal use of opioids “among the younger generation” particularly puzzles and troubles him.

“It doesn’t seem to bother them that they’re putting something into their system that’s going to cause them to be addicted and commit other crimes. Frankly, I can’t imagine why anyone would use that stuff. And yet they do it on an incredible basis.”

West Virginia

[Family addresses ‘opioid generational curse’ striking the Ohio Valley](#)

WTOV

While the primary focus in these abuse and neglect court cases is the protection of the child, a system is in place to rehabilitate the parents without completely removing their connection with their son or daughter.

One family has felt the impact of life without rehabilitated biological parents as they shared their thoughts on the epidemic.

“They work with the parent to help them get past their substance abuse issue to help them get past what brought them to that place in the courtroom,” said W. Va. Senator Ryan Weld. “One of the biggest problems we face in West Virginia as part of the opioid crisis is the *overcrowding of our foster care children system.*”