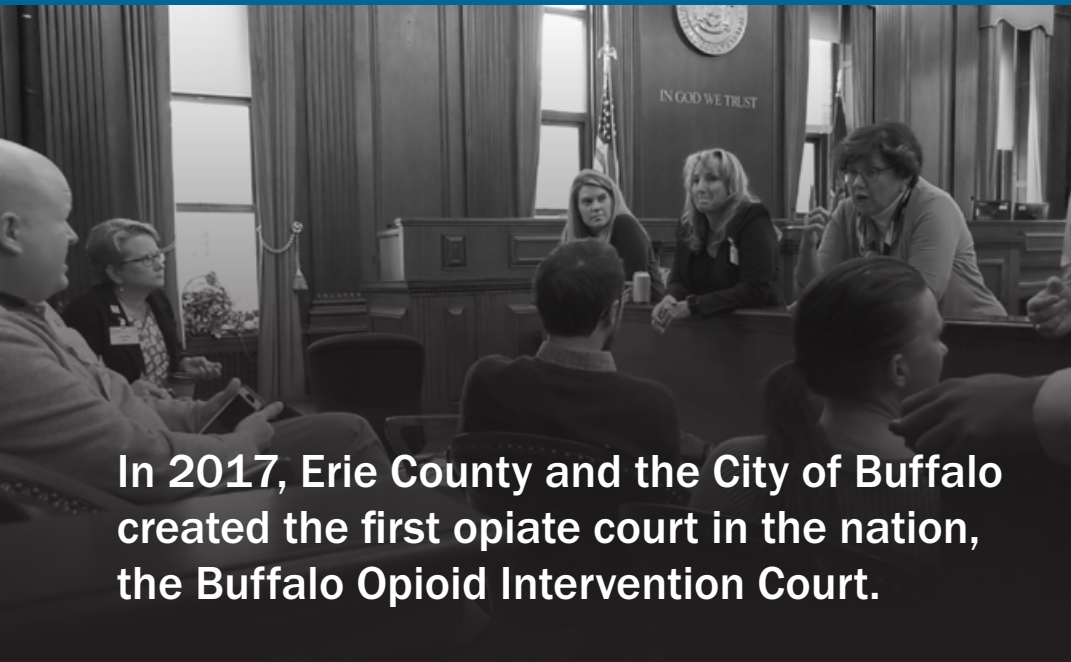
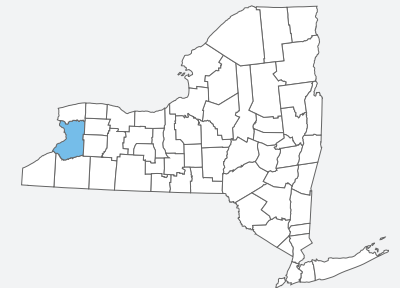


# Opiate Court and Probation



**In 2017, Erie County and the City of Buffalo created the first opiate court in the nation, the Buffalo Opioid Intervention Court.**



This series of briefs highlights innovations happening in Erie County, New York, the site of a recent peer exchange for the Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Abuse Program (COSSAP) grantees. Erie County was selected as the site of this peer exchange due to its comprehensive and collaborative approach to addressing the opioid crisis.

## Buffalo Opioid Intervention Court

In 2017, Erie County and the City of Buffalo created the first opiate court in the nation, the Buffalo Opioid Intervention Court. Within 24 hours of arrest, all individuals in jail custody are screened for opioid use disorder and those who screen positive are flagged in the court system's database. The Opioid Intervention Court, a pre-plea court, finds individuals with noted opioid use disorders through the court system database and engages with them to see if they would like to participate. After an individual agrees to participate in the court program, he or she is released and connected to community-based treatment within 24 hours. All court proceedings are halted until the individual enters treatment and criminal charges are put on hold for 60 to 90 days while the participant focuses on recovery.

Court participants work with a case manager to engage in Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) and/or inpatient or outpatient treatment for alcohol, drugs and mental health. Case managers assist participants in employment services, job readiness and schooling. Participants must check in with the court in person daily, Monday through Friday, to discuss support needs and progress; however, these check-ins can be reduced based on progress and need throughout the program. Participants must also agree to random drug tests and wellness checks from case managers. The opiate court also accepts individuals without any formal charges.

The misuse of opiates became a growing public health and justice issue in Erie County, in the 2010s. In 2016, the county of 925,000 people experienced 301 opiate overdose deaths. Opiate painkillers were the number one prescribed drug in the county in 2012, topping 80,000 prescriptions. This, along with the closing of two major substance abuse treatment clinics in Erie County in 2013, led County Executive Mark Polancarz to declare a public health crisis and task county and other local leadership with finding solutions to save lives. Since 2016, **the county has invested over \$1.7 billion** of county, state, federal and grant funding in developing an array of interventions **to curb the number of opiate-related deaths and connect county residents to treatment.**



## Opiate Probation Unit

Erie County also has an Opiate Probation Unit. The unit is funded by a three-year grant and has a capacity for 30 participants that have been identified as having a substance use disorder (opiate in particular) using the Texas Christian University Drug Screen V (TCUDS-V). Participants must be sentenced in Erie County. Probation officers are trained on MAT and how to support clients with opioid use disorders. Peer navigators also provide support for participants and assist officers with case

management using their lived experience with opiate misuse. Probation unit participants also receive specialized support such as home visits within the first two weeks. During the home visit, the participant's family is provided guidance on how to support him or her through the process, how to administer naloxone and treatment service information. Once a participant's case stabilizes, he or she is then transferred to a standard probation caseload and continue to work with his/her assigned peer navigator.

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