

NEWS BITES

MARCH 2026

LAPPA NEWS

PUBLICATIONS

Model Acts

The [Model Addressing Drug Diversion in Healthcare Settings Act](#): (1) requires healthcare entities to establish policies and procedures for the prevention and detection of drug diversion by healthcare professionals and ensure that treatment and recovery support services are offered to eligible healthcare professionals; (2) requires certain individuals and entities to report healthcare professionals suspected of misusing drugs and/or alcohol, diverting drugs for personal use, having an untreated substance use disorder, or practicing while impaired and establish penalties for failure to make such reports; (3) requires boards, as defined in the Act, to establish or participate in an alternative to discipline program for eligible healthcare professionals; (4) establishes legal protections for individuals who make reports as required by the Act; (5) provides immunity from civil and criminal liability for specified individuals and entities for actions taken pursuant to the Act; (6) establishes penalties for healthcare entities that fail to take corrective action after discovering diversion by a healthcare professional; (7) establishes program reporting and audit requirements; (8) establishes technology grants for healthcare entities to be used for the prevention and detection of drug diversion; and (9) establishes funding provisions for alternative to discipline programs.

The [Model Automatic License Plate Recognition System Act](#): (1) establishes the governmental entities authorized to use automatic license plate recognition systems; (2) establishes how data captured by or derived from automatic license plate recognition systems can be used by governmental entities; (3) requires governmental entities to establish policies for access to and use of automatic license plate recognition systems and data captured by or derived from such systems; (4) establishes data retention, data collection, and data reporting requirements for governmental entities that use automatic license plate recognition systems; (5) requires governmental entities that use automatic license plate recognition system data to establish policies setting forth, among other things, how such data can be used; and (6) establishes penalties for governmental entities who violate the Act.

[The Model State Office of Drug Control Policy Act](#): (1) establishes a state agency to direct, coordinate, and oversee enforcement, prevention, education, treatment, and recovery policies and programs in a specific jurisdiction; (2) identifies the powers and duties of an established agency; (3) identifies the criteria for the director of the agency; and (4) provides funding for the agency. The Act builds on the mission and purpose of the federal Office of National Drug Control Policy and on the laws in states from across the country that have created such successful and robust state agencies.

50-state Summaries

[Kratom: Summary of State Laws](#) - Kratom is an herb derived from a leafy Southeast Asian tree and contains two psychoactive compounds that can bind to opioid receptors in the brain and produce a pharmacological response similar to effects produced by other opioid agonists, such as morphine. As of January 2026, 30 states and the District of Columbia regulate kratom. This document: (1) provides a singular resource for each jurisdiction's laws; (2) allows for a comparison of these laws between jurisdictions; and (3) identifies and highlights interesting provisions.

Speaking Engagements

LAPPA Senior Legislative Attorney Stephanie Noblit, was part of a panel discussion at the Winter Institute on Addiction Policy and the Law event, sponsored by the O'Neill Institute for National and Global Health Law at the Georgetown University Law Center on February 9th and 10th. Ms. Noblit's panel discussed housing and treatment issues for those with substance use disorder, with Ms. Noblit specifically speaking on involuntary commitment for substance use disorder and its legal and ethical implications. In the coming months, LAPPA will publish a model act on involuntary commitment for substance use disorder.

Miscellaneous

LAPPA Managing Attorney Jon Woodruff collaborated on a project that has been selected for a poster presentation at the upcoming Together for Hope Conference in April. Submitted by Jeffrey Bratberg, Pharm.D., FAPhA, from the University of Rhode Island, the poster is titled "Prescribing Possibilities: State Policies for Comprehensive Pharmacist-Led Buprenorphine Care." Together For Hope is an annual event that brings together addiction experts and advocates from across Massachusetts to collaborate, share knowledge, and inspire hope in the fight against addiction.

FEDERAL NEWS BITS

President Trump Launches New Initiative to Tackle Substance Abuse: At the end of January, President Trump announced the launch of the [Great American Recovery Initiative](#), a program aimed at bolstering the federal government's response to substance misuse. The initiative will: (1) recognize substance use disorder like other chronic health issues; (2) focus on increasing awareness about the dangers of drug addiction; and (3) work with federal agencies to integrate drug prevention programs, early intervention, treatment, recovery support and reentry into society. Co-chairing the effort will be U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and Kathryn Burgum, the spouse of Interior Secretary Doug Burgum. Both have battled substance use disorder and are vocal advocates for addiction recovery. Secretary Kennedy has stated that this endeavor will differ from others because of the level of coordination that will be required by different federal agencies.

DEA Shuts Down Hundreds of Illegal Online Pharmacies: At the beginning of February, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), in conjunction with the Eastern District of New York, announced the seizure of more than 200 website domains tied to an India-based transnational criminal organization (TCO). This particular TCO has been under investigation since 2022 and is allegedly responsible for at least 10 overdoses (both fatal and non-fatal) inside the U.S. Investigators determined that the operators of these online pharmacies were illegally dispensing and shipping diverted medications, without valid prescriptions, to customers throughout the U.S. in violation of the Controlled Substances Act. Over the course of the multi-year investigation, the DEA identified thousands of customers who purchased medication through these online pharmacies; the DEA then sent 20,000 letters to the public asking for information in support of the ongoing investigation. In 2024, the DEA

issued a public service announcement warning all Americans about the rise in illegal online pharmacy activity, including the fact that many of these illegal outlets sell counterfeit pills containing fentanyl to unsuspecting customers who believe that they are purchasing legitimate medication.

President Trump Assembles Coalition to Crush Cartels: At the recent Shield of the Americas Summit, President Trump announced that he has created the Americas Counter Cartel Coalition, a new organization of Latin American and Caribbean countries. This military coalition will be tasked with eradicating the cartels that have long been engaged in drug-trafficking and other organized criminal activity in the Western Hemisphere. The one-day Summit was attended by leaders from Argentina, El Salvador, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Chile, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guyana, Honduras, Panama, Paraguay, and Trinidad and Tobago. Also in attendance were several high-ranking administration officials and former Secretary of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Kristi Noem, whom Trump named as special envoy to the Summit. Over the last year, the Administration has designated more than one dozen groups in Latin America and the Caribbean as Foreign Terrorist Organizations, ordering 44 military strikes on boats in the Caribbean Sea and eastern Pacific Ocean that were allegedly carrying illicit drugs.

NATIONAL NEWS BITS

Roadmap for Spending Opioid Settlement Money Released: A coalition of 237 nonprofits and agencies has released the third annual edition of “[A National Roadmap for Opioid Settlement Funds: Supporting Communities & Ending the Overdose Crisis](#)” – a guidance document that assists elected officials, government agencies and other entities, and individuals tasked with making decisions related to the spending of funds won in the settlements with opioid manufacturers and distributors. The report is divided into six sections: (1) purpose/context/philosophical grounding; (2) state settlement spending and supplantation amidst federal funding cuts; (3) proven solutions; (4) proven harms; (5) governance and accountability; and (6) call to action. The coalition that publishes this roadmap hopes that, if followed, it will help states responsibly allocate settlement funds, ultimately leading to a significant reduction in the number of people harmed by using drugs. New features in this year’s report include an acknowledgement of changes in federal funding levels, a caution against using settlement dollars to fill funding gaps, and examples of the best and worst spending of settlement monies across the country.

STATE NEWS BITS

Alabama: Governor Kay Ivey awarded \$598,000 in grant funds to the Alabama Department of Corrections to help prisoners overcome the drug addictions that likely contributed to their incarceration. The grant will be used to operate Residential Substance Abuse Treatment programs at eight Alabama prisons, which include a six-month program focused on ending addiction followed by at least 12 months of group sessions with a goal of long-term behavioral change. Grants were made available by the U.S. Department of Justice and will be administered by the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs.

Arkansas: In what would be the strictest measure of its kind in the country, the Arkansas Department of Corrections is set to ban all physical books, magazines, and newspapers that are sent directly to inmates. This restriction, presented as a drug-fighting measure, would impact approximately 17,000 men and women in 20 prison facilities across the state. Some lawmakers and advocacy groups have asked for a review of the policy and alternative solutions, claiming they have not seen enough evidence that drugs are infiltrating the prison system inside printed materials. Opponents of the measure are also concerned that denying incarcerated people printed materials denigrates their ability to succeed after release.

California: Following a statewide campaign sponsored by the Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control and the Department of Public Health (DPH), more than 3,300 kratom and 7-hydroxymitragynine (7-OH) products were removed from shelves across the state. Additionally, Governor Newsom announced that 95 percent of businesses are in compliance with the state’s prohibition on the sale of illegal kratom and 7-OH products. DPH has seized more than five million dollars worth of kratom and 7-OH products, including kratom in dietary supplements, drinks, foods, and gummies, all of which are illegal to sell or manufacture in California.

Florida: A recovery center in Miami is making use of a new approach to opioid addiction treatment, one that focuses on a noninvasive device that stimulates nerves to ease withdrawal symptoms. The treatment has been shown to ease stomachaches, backaches, sweating, and nausea – all symptoms commonly associated with opioid withdrawal. At the facility, patients go once per day for up to one week of treatment, which consists of having electrodes attached to the skin. One course of treatment costs about \$8,000, which is significantly less than the cost of residential rehab. According to existing research, the use of electrical neurostimulation to treat addiction is showing promise, but there are unknowns, particularly with respect to long-term outcomes.

Massachusetts: Voters in the commonwealth may have the chance to repeal legalized use of recreational marijuana, something 53.7 percent of voters approved in 2016. The ballot measure has been officially certified by the secretary of the commonwealth to further the very long process, with its elections division having already certified nearly 80,000 signatures backing the petition entitled, “An Act to Restore a Sensible Marijuana Policy.” The measure, while reversing legal recreational cannabis use, would preserve medicinal use.

Montana: The Montana Department of Justice and the Billings Police Department have issued warnings about the increased presence of the powerful synthetic opioid carfentanil throughout Yellowstone County. The Eastern Montana High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area Task Force recently seized 4,000 pills that tested positive for carfentanil – seizures involving a positive carfentanil test are more typical when only a couple of pills are tested. Carfentanil is an extremely powerful synthetic opioid used to tranquilize elephants, is 100 times more potent than fentanyl, and is 10,000 times more potent than morphine.

New Mexico: Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham signed legislation restricting how data from automatic license plate recognition (APLR) systems can be used after it is collected. New Mexico’s law will specifically prohibit data from APLRs from being shared for purposes of immigration enforcement and investigating individuals seeking abortion services. The measure will also bar using collected data to try and identify people who take part in protests or other activities protected by the U.S. Constitution. Backers of the legislation say it was critical to protect New Mexicans’ privacy and safety in today’s era of mass surveillance. Law enforcement agencies will still be able to access data in criminal investigative matters such as traffic enforcement and drug trafficking. LAPP recently released the [Model Automatic License Plate Recognition System Act](#) and has a [50-state summary](#) on the topic.

New York: Recently enacted legislation will soon require employers that are federally mandated to maintain first aid supplies in the workplace to include an opioid antagonist (*e.g.*, naloxone) as part of those supplies. Per the legislation, regulations must be adopted prior to December 13, 2026 and must contain an appropriate number of opioid antagonists for a particular workplace based on its size, employee training, usage considerations, and any other issues that U.S. Department of Labor finds necessary. Prior to the deadline, employers that are required to maintain first aid supplies must also update their first aid protocols, including those that pertain to training staff on storage/access/proper use of opioid antagonists.

Oregon: Senate democrats prevented a vote on a bill that would have banned the distribution of needles and other drug paraphernalia within 2,000 feet of a school or childcare facility by voting down a motion made by Senate Republican Bruce Starr to pull the bill from committee up to the senate floor. The measure previously died in committee after the Democratic Party Chair Nathan Soltz declined to move the bill forward despite broad bipartisan support and concerns from parents and neighbors across the state about used needles being discarded near schools.

Washington: Attempts in the state legislature to pass a stricter drunk driving law stalled in the house, after the senate approved a bill lowering the current limit from 0.08 percent to 0.05 percent. Had the measure been enacted, Washington would have joined Utah with the toughest standard in the country – Utah moved to the 0.05 percent standard in 2018. Debate on lowering the limit in the state has intensified as traffic fatalities have been climbing, including fatalities involving alcohol-impaired drivers. A survey sponsored by the Washington Traffic Safety Commission found that 54 percent of those polled supported lowering the legal limit while one third opposed it. That support grew to 71 percent and opposition dropped to 25 percent when those surveyed were given information related to the likely impacts of a lower limit, such as a decrease in fatal crashes.

NOTABLE STUDIES

Opioid Treatment Programs Struggling with Patient Retention: A study authored by RTI International, an independent scientific research institute, concluded that many opioid treatment programs (OTPs) in the United States are struggling to keep patients engaged. Program retention is one of strongest predictors for long-term recovery, according to the study's lead author, Tami Mark, Ph.D., and this study found that at typical OTPs 61 percent of Medicaid patients remained in care for more than one month, but among the bottom quarter of programs, only 40 percent of patients remained in treatment for at least one month. Researchers found that there was very high variability of treatment duration and treatment retention rates across OTPs, indicating an opportunity for establishing a quality standard that could improve long-term patient outcomes. Visit [JAMA Network Open](#), to read the study.

ABOUT THE LEGISLATIVE ANALYSIS AND PUBLIC POLICY ASSOCIATION

The Legislative Analysis and Public Policy Association (LAPPA) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization whose mission is to conduct legal and legislative research and analysis and draft legislation on effective law and policy in the areas of public safety and health, substance use disorder, and the criminal justice system.

LAPPA produces up-to-the-minute comparative analyses, publications, educational brochures, and other tools ranging from podcasts to model laws and policies that can be used by national, state, and local criminal justice and substance use disorder policymakers and practitioners who want the latest comprehensive information on law and policy. Examples of topics on which LAPPA has assisted stakeholders include naloxone access laws, law enforcement deflection to treatment, medication for addiction treatment in correctional settings, diversion in healthcare settings, and the involuntary commitment of individuals with substance use disorder.

For more information about LAPPA, please visit: <https://legislativeanalysis.org/>.

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