

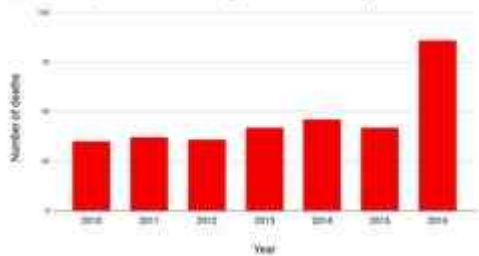
The News-Herald (<http://www.news-herald.com>)

Lake County moves forward with plans to sue opioid manufacturers, distributors

By Andrew Cass, *The News-Herald*

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Lake County unintentional drug-related deaths by year



Lake County officials are moving ahead with [plans to sue opioid manufacturers, wholesale distributors and pill mill doctors](#).

The Lake County commissioners on Dec. 5 passed a resolution asking the Lake County Common Pleas Court to allow the hiring of an outside counsel to handle the litigation.

The same team of attorneys that the commissioners intend to hire already have [filed](#) a 364-page lawsuit in Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Court and were also hired by the [Trumbull County](#)

[commissioners](#).

Lake County Commissioner Daniel P. Troy said they've had to spend a lot more money in a lot more areas because of the opioid epidemic.

Costs of the epidemic can be felt from the increased number of children in the custody of Child Protective Services to increased demands on first responders, the Coroner's Office and the Prosecutor's Office.

Troy said the lawsuit would help them recoup some of the money they've had to expend because of the epidemic.

A record 4,050 people died of drug overdoses in Ohio in 2016. Lake County saw a record 86 overdose deaths last year. So far this year, there are 70 confirmed overdose deaths, according to the Lake County Coroner's Office.

Ohio State University estimates the statewide cost of the opioid epidemic is now as much as \$8.8 billion a year.

"I think everybody at this point agrees there's a problem," attorney Frank L. Gallucci said to the Lake County commissioners [Nov. 15](#). He is one of the attorneys who will be handling the lawsuit.

At that meeting, he said the idea is to specifically seek the damages that have been incurred so far, but also to go after abatement.

By abatement, Gallucci said you first look at secondary education: Educate the next generation of would-be victims. You also look at law enforcement and treatment, he said.

Under the national counsel of New-York based Napoli Shkolnik, legal action is being taken in more than 60 counties in the United States.

In May, Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine [filed a lawsuit](#) against drug manufacturers Purdue Pharma, Endo Health Solutions, Teva, Johnson & Johnson and Allergan.

But, by only going after the manufacturers, the attorney general's lawsuit only goes after part of the problem, Gallucci said.

The attorney general's complaint is about workers' compensation and Medicaid, Gallucci said. That's not going to address damages to job and family service departments or coroners' offices.

The attorneys are working on a contingency fee basis. There will be no cost to the county if no money is recovered in the suit.

"We're convinced this is the right step to take at this point," Commissioner Jerry Cirino said.

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