

CONTACT:

Dr. Sharon Harris

516-676-2008

safeglencove@yahoo.com

Press Release

August 23, 2017

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**FACTS ABOUT SCHIZOPHRENIA**

The Community Committee of the SAFE Glen Cove Coalition serves as a think tank to examine community needs assessment data, implement alcohol and substance abuse awareness campaigns, educate the public regarding ongoing and emerging alcohol and substance abuse trends and pursue viable funding streams to address gaps in community services.

According to a Community Survey of 1,408 Glen Cove residents conducted by the Coalition in 2016, Schizophrenia was an area of concern. Since substance abuse can be both a cause and a symptom of schizophrenia, it is of concern to the SAFE Glen Cove Coalition.

Schizophrenia is a serious mental illness that interferes with a person's ability to think clearly, manage emotions, make decisions and relate to others. It affects about 1% of Americans. However, it is possible to live well with schizophrenia.

- Schizophrenia frequently presents in the teenage years. It affects girls and boys equally, with boys presenting at an earlier age. The average age of onset tends to be in the late teens to early 20s for men, and the late 20s to early 30s for women.
- Schizophrenia usually develops gradually over the course of several years. A person with schizophrenia will often have negative symptoms for a few years before other symptoms emerge. Some of these symptoms include:

Social withdrawal

Lack of attention to personal hygiene

Difficulty concentrating

Focus on bizarre ideas

Abuse of substances – particularly alcohol and marijuana

Hallucinations

Abnormal motor behavior

Feelings of persecution

Research suggests that schizophrenia may have several possible causes:

- **Genetics.** Having a history of family psychosis greatly increases the risk. Schizophrenia occurs at roughly 10% of people who have a first-degree relative with the disorder, such as a parent or sibling.
- **Environment.** Exposure to viruses or malnutrition before birth, particularly in the first and second trimesters, has been shown to increase the risk. Birth trauma and fetal brain damage in utero also can increase the risk.
- **Brain Chemistry.** Problems with certain brain chemicals, including neurotransmitters called dopamine and glutamate, may contribute to schizophrenia.
- **Substance Abuse.** Some studies have suggested that taking mind-altering drugs during teen and young adulthood years can increase the risk of schizophrenia. A growing body of evidence indicates that smoking marijuana increases the risk of psychotic incidents. The younger and more frequent the use, the greater the risk.

To be diagnosed with schizophrenia, two or more of the following symptoms must be occurring persistently in a person along with obvious reduced functioning:

- Delusions
- Hallucinations
- Disorganized speech
- Disorganized or catatonic behavior
- Negative symptoms as described earlier

Schizophrenia is usually treated with a combination of medication and psychological therapy. However, drug treatment is the primary therapy. The most common medications prescribed for schizophrenia are usually antipsychotic medications. Various types of psychological therapy are available to be used in conjunction with medication. The earlier schizophrenia is detected and treated, the better the outcome. The following are also highly recommended to help support a person affected by schizophrenia;

- **Family-Based Services:** Family interventions educate the person's family about Schizophrenia and how to cope, and provide crisis intervention and emotional support.
- **Assertive Community Treatment:** This type of treatment involves a high level of contact between a variety of mental health professionals and the person with Schizophrenia and helps to decrease hospitalizations and homelessness.
- **Supported Employment:** Supported Employment helps people to look for a job and be effective in that job, once found.
- **Skills Training:** Skills training helps people with Schizophrenia work on their social skills, ability to live independently, and any other skills necessary for living in the community.

A local resource for Glen Cove residents is The Melillo Center for Mental Health, 113 Glen Cove Avenue, Glen Cove, NY, 516-676-2388.

For more information about Schizophrenia please contact the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) at www.samhsa.gov, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, www.nami.org, or www.teenmentalhealth.org.

For more information about SAFE and its other initiatives please contact the office at: 516-676-2008 or visit the website at <http://www.safeglencove.org> or our Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition>.