

## NEWS BRIEFS

### SAFE Coalition: On opioids and adolescents

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The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's Office of Adolescent Health maintains more people than ever are dying from opioid overdose; in 2015, over 33,000 people were killed by opioids. Preliminary data suggests that there were more than 53,000 opioid overdose deaths in 2016. In October 2017, President Trump declared the opioid crisis a public health emergency and pledged resources to address it.

The SAFE Glen Cove Coalition is conducting an opioid prevention awareness campaign entitled, "Keeping Glen Cove SAFE" to educate and update the community regarding opioid use and its consequences.

All adolescents are at risk for misusing opioids. However, there are a wide range of factors that can either increase the risk of prescription drug misuse or help protect against it. For example, individuals that are considered to have a great risk of opioid misuse include those with: acute and chronic pain, physical health problems, or a history of mental illness (such as depression) or other substance use or misuse. Also, youth who have witnessed a family member overdose or who have a large number of friends who misuse prescription drugs. And national data indicates that more than half of 12th graders who reported misusing prescription opioids said they got the drugs from a friend or relative.

Individuals at lower risk include those who commit to doing well in school, finishing school and those who are concerned about the dangers of prescription drugs. Additionally, youth who have a strong bond with their parent and whose parents express disapproval of substance use have

a lower risk of misuse.

To help prevent opioid misuse, those who care about and for adolescents should:

- Treat pain cautiously. Adolescents often are initially exposed to opioids through prescriptions; dentist prescriptions account for 31 percent of a first exposure to opioids. Some promising alternatives for pain management already exist, while others are being developed. Health care providers should turn to other treatment options before prescribing opioids for acute and chronic pain.

- Talk with teens about pain treatment and management. Regardless of drug use history, reach out to youth. Building strong relationships with adolescents is the first step to connecting with youth on drug prevention.

- Act when you suspect an adolescent or someone close to them is misusing opioids. Signs of opioid misuse may include: drowsiness, constipation, nausea, dizziness, vomiting, dry mouth, headaches, sweating, and mood changes.

If you are concerned about opioid misuse, call Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service's National Helpline at -1800-662-HELP (4345) and consult the directory for opioid treatment programs in your area. For more information about the Health and Human Services Administration Services please visit [www.hhs.gov](http://www.hhs.gov). For information about the SAFE Glen Cove Coalition visit SAFE Inc. at: [www.safeglen-cove.org](http://www.safeglen-cove.org), or follow them on: [www.facebook.com/safeglen-covecoalition](http://www.facebook.com/safeglen-covecoalition).

-Laura Lane