

Press Release

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SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: The Opioid Epidemic and the Foster Care System

The United States foster care system has shown a significant increase in child placement due to the opioid crisis across the nation. Foster care placement has increased by 19% since 2010 and the foster care systems are not equipped for the increase in numbers of children. The foster care system's attempt at trying to protect children from their addicted parents has become a crisis of its own. Not only has it increased the number of children in the foster care system, but it has backed up the court system as child welfare agencies are required by law to reunify children with their parents. The "mandated to treatment" process is lengthy due to the child's parents often relapsing. In many unfortunate situations, parents are not able to maintain sobriety long enough for them to even be considered getting custody of their children.

Drugs when abused often impair decision making and in some cases, parents often abuse not only drugs but their children. More cases like this have increased due to the opioid epidemic. Opioids attach to receptors in the brain. Normally these opioids are the endogenous variety that are created naturally in the body. Once attached, they send signals to the brain of the "opioid effect" which blocks pain, slows breathing, and has a general calming and anti-depressing effect. The body cannot produce enough natural opioids to stop severe or chronic pain nor can it produce enough to cause an overdose. Addiction to opioids makes it particularly difficult for an addict to agree to get the help they need and stay sober.

Parents who use opioids are not competent to care for a well being of a child. National news has reported cases where a parent has overdosed behind the wheel of their car with their children in the back seat. This unfortunate scenario is just one of many.

According to the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System statistics, in 2016 there were an estimate of 437,465 children in foster care. About half of the children (250, 248) who left foster care in 2016 were discharged to be reunited with their parents or care takers. The court has a right to take away parental rights permanently voluntarily or otherwise. A child may never be adopted and will be in the states custody until he reaches adulthood where he no longer stays in the care of the state. Family members in some cases do take custody of the addict's child. For example, grandparents have taken custody and want their children to get the help they need to break this addiction cycle to protect the next generation.

The Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) falls under the auspices of the Adoption and Foster Care Statistics Bureau, an organization that collects case-level information on all children in foster care and those who have been adopted with title IV-

E agency involvement (special needs child adoptions). For more information please visit <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/research-data-technology/statistics-research/afcars>.

The SAFE Glen Cove Coalition is conducting an opioid prevention awareness campaign entitled, "Keeping Glen Cove SAFE," in order to educate and update the community regarding opioid use and its consequences. To learn more about the SAFE Glen Cove Coalition please follow us on www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition or visit SAFE's website to learn more about the Opioid Epidemic at www.safeglencove.org.