

Press Release
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SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: Prevention's Importance in the Opioid Crisis

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), keeping people who do not have an opioid use disorder from becoming addicted is equally important as treating individuals who do.

Research on preventing drug use by addressing vulnerability factors that increase the risk for substance use disorders is an important component of the NIDA HEAL (Helping to End Addiction Long-Term) initiative. HEAL will examine how the human brain develops in the transition from infancy into early adolescence. Evaluating the effects of fetal drug exposures, adverse environments, genetics, and mental illness will provide knowledge to help understand how these risk factors operate in increasing the chances of someone developing a substance use disorder. NIDA longitudinal research has demonstrated that positively altering a child's life trajectory by reducing various risk factors, strengthening protective factors, and increasing access to resources can reduce or delay later drug use as well as minimize other adverse outcomes like criminality or other mental illness. Risk factors addressed by early childhood interventions can include poor self-regulation, aggression, or insecure attachment to parents. Those addressed in family and school prevention interventions at all ages through the teen years include lack of parental supervision, exposure to drugs at home or at school, and stresses from poverty, neglect, or abuse.

Prevention programs can take many forms, but all in one way or another address these risk factors and/or bolster factors like self-control, peer relationships, or other age-appropriate skills. These forms of resilience may make all the difference in the young person's life when faced with the opportunities and temptations to begin smoking, drinking, or using drugs when they are adolescents, despite whatever adversity they may have experienced when younger.

Because risk factors for drug use are common to other behavioral problems, most prevention interventions do not focus solely on preventing drug use or on preventing a single type of drug use. A wide range of problems can be addressed or averted by addressing core risk or protective factors.

An important research priority is finding out how to widen the utilization and implementation of effective evidence-supported prevention programs. The menu of such interventions is diverse, but few of the options are widely used. Part of the problem is that high-quality intervention programs are costly, and communities may be reluctant to invest the needed resources when the payoff may be years or more in the future. However, studies have strikingly shown that many programs more than pay for themselves. Like other investments—saving for retirement, for instance—primary

prevention of substance use and addiction requires long-term thinking and balancing the short-term costs in money and time against the long-term benefits of a healthier society down the road.

SAFE is the only alcohol and substance abuse prevention, intervention and education agency in the City Of Glen Cove. SAFE provides evidence-based Life Skills Training (LST) to elementary and middle school youth and bi-lingual LST to parents throughout the year. LST incorporates interactive learning, social skills building and specific drug use prevention-related information, providing adolescents and young teens with the confidence and skills necessary to successfully handle challenging situations. The program teaches general self-management skills, social skills and drug resistance skills, such as the ability to challenge misconceptions about drug use and the ability to resist media pressures to use drugs. LST for parents includes substance use and violence prevention program components designed to help strengthen communication with their children and prevent them from using drugs. The program also helps parents prepare their children for a successful and safe transition from adolescence to early adulthood.

The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) is a United States federal-government research institute whose mission is to "lead the Nation in bringing the power of science to bear on drug abuse and addiction". For more information please visit www.drugabuse.gov.

The SAFE Glen Cove Coalition is joining in the fight against this epidemic by 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