

Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: The Opioid Epidemic and Foster Care

According to a recent article in the November edition of Nassau County Department of Human Services Newsletter the opioid epidemic has caused an increase in foster care. The influx comes at a time when the foster care system is scrambling to adjust to major federal changes.

Since 2000, the number of children placed in foster care because of parental drug use has more than doubled, according to a study published in JAMA Pediatrics this month. Using data from the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System, researchers found that child removals due to parental drug use rose 147 percent over the last two decades -- from 39,130 in 2000 to 96,672 in 2017. Parental substance abuse now accounts for about a quarter of foster care entries across the country. The results are not surprising to individuals working in social services.

Sarasota Florida has seen a 200 percent increase of kids coming into foster care over the past three or four years because of substance abuse. In Ohio the opioid epidemic has taken an overwhelming toll on the child protective system. Parental substance abuse in general is the primary cause of children entering foster care. Opioids aren't the only drug to blame. About a decade ago, meth use was driving the rise in removals in Florida.

These troubling trends are playing out at a time when the foster care system is in the middle of a major overhaul. The Family First Prevention Services Act, which was signed by President Trump last year, will restructure the system to focus more on preventing family separations and reducing the dependence on group homes. The new law requires foster care entities to provide mental health care, in-home parenting programs and substance abuse treatment to parents at risk of losing their children. Critics of the law argue that while its intentions are good, the outcomes might initially do more harm than good. With many foster care agencies already struggling to handle the number of kids, dramatically revamping the system to focus on keeping kids with families ignores the maxed out realities and the lack of resources available to switch to a new framework.

The federal government has been slow to communicate details about how the changes will play out. The law is set to go into effect in October, but the feds just released the first round of eligible programs for new federal funding in April. In part because of the delay in information, the vast majority of states are deferring implementation for two years. Time will tell how Family First impacts the number of children placed in foster care because of drug use.

The Nassau County Department of Human Services provides the residents of Nassau County with a constituent centered and holistic approach to the delivery of services and information through and between its Office for the Aging, Office of Mental Health, Chemical Dependency, and Developmental Disabilities Service, Office for the Physically Challenged, and Office of Youth Services. To read the full article please visit file:///C:/Users/Sharon/Downloads/NCDHS%20November19%20Newsletter.pdf

SAFE, Inc. is the only alcohol and substance abuse prevention, intervention and education agency in the City of Glen Cove. Its 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