

Press Release

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### **SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: New Data on Opioid Deaths in D.C Discouraging**

According to The Washington Post when opioid overdoses peaked in the District in 2017 with 281 fatalities it was clear that the response time to address the problem was not steadfast. Not only was there no real strategy, but there was also active resistance to practices that had proved to be effective in other cities battling the epidemic. That has changed: Even some of the harshest critics now credit Mayor Muriel E. Bowser's administration with a far more positive response. However, 2019 saw another dramatic spike in overdose deaths.

Preliminary data recently released by the D.C. Department of Behavioral Health showed that 220 people died of opioid overdoses in the first 10 months of 2019 (a 22% increase) when compared with the same period in 2018. Data from the final two months of the year is still being analyzed, but officials are bracing for what could turn out to be the second-deadliest year for drug users since the start of the opioid epidemic five years ago. The number of deaths had dropped substantially in 2018, to 213 victims, and so the new increase in deaths was unsettling for officials who had celebrated the downward trend. The increase occurred despite intensive efforts launched last year by the Bowser administration to reduce opioid misuse and related deaths. The city has spent more than \$15 million on efforts that included expanded treatment programs for drug users and increased distribution of the lifesaving overdose antidote naloxone.

According to officials, among the factors driving the year-over-year increase was a higher prevalence of fentanyl and an increase in deadly drug behaviors in younger people, a population that was not specifically targeted in the city's harm-reduction efforts. The city focused much of its effort on middle-aged African American drug users and it appears from the data that efforts to connect these longtime heroin consumers to treatment may have slowed the number of deaths in that population.

That's encouraging but City officials have asked for a deeper dive into the data and an examination of best practices of other cities to help develop and implement more effective solutions.

The Washington Post is a major American daily newspaper published in Washington, D.C. It has taken the leadership role in reporting the opioid epidemic from inception. For more information about the opioid epidemic please visit The Opioid Files at [www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com).

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](https://www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition) or visit SAFE's website to learn more about the Opioid Epidemic at [www.safeglencove.org](http://www.safeglencove.org).