

Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: The Trump Administration, COVID-19 and the Opioid Epidemic**

A recent article in The Washington Post discusses steps taken by the Trump administration to protect the American people during the covid-19 pandemic, including mobilizing the federal government to ensure health-care workers have the resources and flexibility they need to respond to this national emergency. This encompasses helping the nearly 22 million Americans struggling with the disease of addiction. The Trump administration remains fully dedicated to ensuring prevention, treatment and recovery services remain in place and serving those who need them during this critical time.

Substance use disorder is a complex brain disease manifested by the compulsive use of substances such as opioids, methamphetamine, cocaine and other illicit drugs despite their harmful consequences. Even under normal circumstances, individuals with such a disorder, particularly those undergoing medication-assisted treatment to break their opioid addictions, have a difficult time recovering. The threat posed by covid-19, along with the mitigation measures in place across the country to prevent its spread, makes their treatment much more difficult.

The physical requirements for patients to receive their treatment — such as clustering in line to receive medications in person and visiting clinics for therapy — greatly increase the chances that both providers and patients alike contract the coronavirus. Moreover, individuals undergoing treatment are more susceptible to the disease. Opioids can slow breathing and decrease oxygen in the blood, leading to potentially life-threatening conditions, while methamphetamine use constricts blood vessels, leading to long-term pulmonary damage. Many individuals in treatment might also be unemployed or underemployed and therefore less likely to have received quality medical care through employer-provided insurance.

Most important, patients with substance use disorder are extremely vulnerable to relapse if their treatment is disrupted. Even briefly interrupting their medication makes them more likely to drift toward illicit drugs, with a much greater risk of fatal overdose.

It is crucial that federal, state and local leaders understand and communicate the complications posed by the covid-19 pandemic to treatment providers and those on the path to recovery. For that reason, the Trump administration is working to identify and address federal laws and regulations that might impede treatment.

For example, the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy is working closely with federal partners and has exercised its authorities to reduce barriers to treatment and streamline procedures. The federal government is greatly expanding telehealth options for opioid treatment programs, reducing requirements to perform in-person physical evaluations for patients treated by these programs and allowing for adequate social distance between providers and their patients in a clinical setting. During this national emergency, they are also granting blanket, state-level exceptions for patients in these programs to receive up to 28 days of take-home doses of treatment medication for opioid use disorder, so long as their provider assesses they are stable and can safely benefit from this increased flexibility.

Federal partners have issued updated guidance for patients quarantined at home and exemptions for allowing alternate delivery methods of medications to opioid treatment providers and are continually providing guidance as states and private providers raise new issues that make continuity of care difficult to maintain.

The Washington Post is a major American daily newspaper published in Washington, D.C. It has taken a leadership role in following the Nations opioid epidemic. Please visit The Post's Opioid Files for more information at [www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com).

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](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)