

Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: COVID-19 and Lingering Depression and Anxiety

According to Nassau County Department of Human Services mental health experts, six months after New Yorkers first quarantined in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the initial shock may have eased but the stress and anxiety have lingered. The demand for counseling and therapy has increased as Long Islanders wait to see if schools can remain open, brace for flu season or even anticipate a possible second wave of COVID-19.

In June 2020 on average, 36.5% of adults in the U.S. reported symptoms of anxiety and depression, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's Household Pulse Survey. Between January 2019 and June 2019, 11% of adults reported those symptoms. Health care providers are using a mix of telehealth and in-person visits to facilitate support groups, individual therapy and family therapy for people grappling with fear, anxiety, depression and other challenges stemming from the pandemic. A silver lining of the COVID pandemic is that it pushed mental health, fullforce, into telehealth and therefore a decrease in cancellations and no shows.

At NYU Winthrop, demand for mental health services skyrocketed. The pandemic "has a ripple effect on almost every layer of society," said Dr. Aaron Pinkhasov, chairman of the Department of Psychiatry at NYU Winthrop Hospital, which has seen a 40% increase in demand for mental health services. The ferocity of the news cycle has added to the stress, with reports of clusters of new cases emerging in New York and even the president and first lady testing positive in recent days. No age group has been spared and the lack of social contact has been especially difficult for young children as well as senior citizens. Additionally, there is the pressure on adults caring for their children and aging parents, in many cases while working from home.

During the height of the pandemic, the daily toll of infections, hospitalizations and deaths was grim and overwhelming. In April, over 700 New Yorkers died in one day. But the percentage of new COVID-19 cases has hovered around a relatively low 1% for many weeks. The spread of the virus was slowed by the economic shutdown and individuals wearing masks, sheltering in place and avoiding crowds. The success came at an emotional price- a chronic malaise. Health care workers on the front lines fought

hard to help patients, while dealing with their own stress, said Dr. Curtis Reisinger, a psychologist and director of Northwell's Employee and Family Assistance Program, which offers confidential counseling services saw an eightfold increase in the number of people who called us after COVID and that increase has come, in part, because people who might have been uncomfortable asking for assistance, realize how helpful talking to a therapist could be.

Others have seen existing mental health conditions aggravated as the rate of depression has risen during the crisis. Additionally, mental health professionals are seeing many school-aged children dealing with the aftermath of quarantine isolation and having to get used to a whole new world as there is a fear of the disease, not just for themselves and their siblings but for their parents and grandparents.

It is highly recommended for individuals struggling with the "new normal" to reach out to local mental health providers for much needed support during this difficult time. Referrals can also be made through primary physicians or school district clinical personnel.

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. The department facilitates the sharing and exchange of knowledge, skill, and professionalism in a comprehensive and integrated manner. Additionally, the Department of Human Services works closely with, and enjoys a collaborative relationship with many non-profit and community-based organizations throughout the county. For more information please visit www.nassaucountyny.gov.

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 COVID-19 Epidemic and its correlation to increased mental illness, alcohol and substance use at www.safeglencove.org.