

Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: The Opioid Epidemic Is Still Here

A recent article in The Washington Post discusses the opioid epidemic as being overshadowed by COVID-19. It is understandable that the pandemic ranks as the nation's top public health priority yet we must not forget that opioid addiction has not disappeared.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) maintain the coronavirus pandemic has worsened the opioid crisis. Treatment for addiction is expensive and time-consuming and requires health-care professionals to sustain direct personal interaction with patients. All of that has been made more difficult by the diversion of medical personnel and hospital space to covid-19 and by necessary restrictions on individual movement. Joblessness and social isolation create emotional stress that may interfere with recovery. One in 8 adults surveyed in June by the CDC reported increased substance use since the pandemic began. The American Medical Association (AMA) recently declared itself "greatly concerned" by reports of increased death from overdoses, particularly of the synthetic opioid fentanyl.

Definitive overdose-death statistics for 2020 are not yet available, but trends were heading in the wrong direction even before this year, as provisional CDC figures released in July show. Drug overdose deaths in the United States rose 4.6 percent in 2019 to 70,980, including 50,042 involving opioids, reversing what had been a 4.1 percent decline between 2017 and 2018 — the first such decrease in decades. Additionally, data gathered by researchers at the University of Pittsburgh suggest that the 2018 decline did not reflect improved access to treatment or better treatment methods. Rather, it traced to a short-term drop in supply of a particularly deadly Chinese-made synthetic opioid — carfentanyl. The Obama administration pressured this point and the Trump administration has followed up. Yet supply-side interventions, while welcome and necessary, must be augmented by effective demand reduction. Fentanyl consumption has just begun to spread from the Eastern United States to the previously less

affected states west of the Mississippi, whose share of fentanyl deaths roughly quadrupled between 2017 to 2019.

The opioid epidemic is still thriving and calls for urgent action. In 2016, President Trump promised lasting progress on opioids and has spent \$3 billion per year in new money on the epidemic and Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden has a comprehensive and aggressive plan that would boost the federal commitment to \$125 billion over 10 years.

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.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is a federal agency that conducts and supports health promotion, prevention and preparedness activities in the United States, with the goal of improving overall public health. To learn more about the CDC please visit www.cdc.gov.

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 or visit SAFE's website to learn more about the Opioid Epidemic at www.safeglencove.org.