

Press Release

February 1, 2021

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:

Dr. Sharon Harris

516- 676-2008

safeglencove@yahoo.com

SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Expands Access to Treatment for Opioid Use Disorder

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is announcing it will expand access to medication-assisted treatment (MAT) by exempting physicians from certain certification requirements needed to prescribe buprenorphine for opioid use disorder (OUD) treatment. The American Medical Association (AMA) strongly endorses this decision by HHS to allow physicians to prescribe buprenorphine without a waiver. Patients are struggling to find physicians who are authorized to prescribe; the onerous regulations discourage physicians from being certified to prescribe it. The AMA urged HHS to change the regulations last year in order to remove a major barrier to reducing the nationwide epidemic of drug-related overdose and death.

More than 83,000 drug overdose deaths occurred in the United States in the 12 months ending in June 2020, the highest number of overdose deaths ever recorded in a 12-month period, and an increase of over 21% compared to the previous year, according to recent provisional data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The increase in overdose deaths highlights the need for treatment services to be more accessible for people most at risk of overdose and this action will expand access to and availability of treatment for opioid use disorder.

With this change, office-based physicians and physician-led teams working with patients to manage their other medical conditions can also treat them for their opioid use disorder without being subjected to a separate and burdensome regulatory regime. Ensuring physician-led teams for treating patients with OUD is critical to ending the opioid epidemic. Removing the waiver requirement can also help lessen the stigma associated with this treatment and the persistent health disparities in treating substance use disorders.

It is estimated that more than two million Americans need treatment for opioid use disorder, but only a small percentage actually receive treatment. The CDC recently reported an acceleration of overdose deaths during the COVID-19 pandemic, which has made accessing care

more challenging. Treatment with buprenorphine allows patients with opioid use disorder to lead satisfying, productive lives. This change is a critically important step in making that happen.

Without Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT), the chances of relapse for a person who suffers from OUD are significant; studies have shown that outcomes for people with OUD are much better with MAT.

The United States Department of Health & Human Services, also known as the Health Department, is a cabinet-level executive branch department of the U.S. federal government with the goal of protecting the health of all Americans and providing essential human services. For more information please visit www.hhs.gov.

The American Medical Association is the largest association of physicians—both MDs and DOs—and medical students in the United States. Its mission is "to promote the art and science of medicine and the betterment of public health." For more information please visit www.ama-assn.org.

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.