

Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: Biden Administration and Opioid Prescription Revised Guidelines

According to a recent article in The Washington Post, the Biden administration recently released guidelines to make it easier for doctors and other health-care practitioners to prescribe the drug buprenorphine to treat opioid addiction, softening restrictions widely criticized as hampering the response to the opioid epidemic. Under these guidelines, doctors, physician assistants, nurse practitioners and other providers of care no longer will need to undergo training before they are allowed to prescribe a form of treatment known to reduce overdose deaths.

Studies have shown that people taking the medication are less likely to develop HIV or hepatitis C, or to be unemployed or imprisoned. These new guidelines are intended to help integrate treatment for addictions into primary care by internists and family physicians, as well as in hospital emergency rooms. Addiction specialists and medical groups welcomed the rewritten rules as a useful, if limited, step. They contended the action does not go far enough in removing federal limits on buprenorphine prescribing — rules that do not exist for any other medication.

In announcing the altered guidelines, administration health officials emphasized that fostering medication-assisted treatment is especially important because opioid addictions and deaths have ratcheted up during the COVID-19 pandemic. Preliminary federal figures suggest that 90,000 people in the United States died of drug overdoses in the 12 months ending in September, a record number. Nearly 67,000 of them were fatal overdoses from opioids. Health officials also maintain the pandemic has been accompanied by a startling rise in mental health issues and that addressing these underlying issues is critical. The guidelines are an important

first step that remove burdensome and stigmatizing requirements that have discouraged doctors from being certified to prescribe buprenorphine.

The limitations of prescribing opiates originated in a law adopted by Congress in 2000 that made the medication, a type of opioid itself, that is safer than methadone, available for use in the United States starting in 2002. To prescribe buprenorphine for opioid-use disorder, doctors were required to undergo eight hours of federally specified training and counseling that would qualify them for what is called an “X” waiver. When other health-care practitioners were allowed to prescribe it years later, they were compelled to undergo longer training.

Under the new guidelines, physicians and other health-care practitioners still must apply to the Drug Enforcement Administration for a waiver but no longer need to go through training, as long as they are prescribing the medication for no more than 30 patients at a time.

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 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.