

Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: COVID-19 and the Opioid Epidemic- What the Community Needs to Know
Presented by Steve Chassman, Executive Director of LICADD**

Mr. Steve Chassman, LCSW, CASAC, Executive Director of the Long Island Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (LICADD) once again partnered with the SAFE Glen Cove Coalition to continue to educate the Glen Cove community about the current state of the nation's opioid epidemic in the light of COVID-19.

Mr. Chassman discussed the isolation and anxiety experienced by COVID and individuals turning to drugs and alcohol to find relief. Social isolation, financial setbacks and the grief from death and loss during the pandemic also boosted demand for heroin, cocaine and other drugs. According to Mr. Chassman, Nassau County fatal overdoses have jumped at least 50% year to date from the 36 recorded during the same time period in 2019. COVID-19 curbed the supply of heroin and cocaine so dealers began to cut their products with fentanyl, a cheap and deadly synthetic opioid. In essence, dealers have altered strategies due to restricted air travel. Prices have gone up and purity has gone down. Drug treatment has been remained available despite the pandemic through secure video conferencing to ensure the safety of human service professionals and clients.

The stress of the pandemic has created physical, mental, and social changes in people. When Cortisol and adrenaline are released, our body prepares to fight, flee, or freeze – survive. Some become vigilant while others lose focus and detach. Mr. Chassman explained that Stress manifests itself biologically, psychologically and socially. Coping skills for stress include Acceptance- Accepting things that are beyond your control; Attitude-Try to focus on the positive side of the situation (What good will come from this? What will I learn?) and Perspective- Thinking about the events and situations in life that are causing you stress (Are they important? Are they controllable? Be realistic).

Mr. Chassman discussed the process by which individuals respond to crisis (COVID-19) and their ability to effectively manage and respond to an emotional experience and effective coping strategies, adopting a mind/body/wellness/spiritual approach and making life changes to reduce your stress triggers such as taking time off and setting limits with others. Mindfulness can be thought of as moment to moment, non-judgmental awareness, cultivated by paying attention in a specific way, that is, in the present

moment, non-reactive, non-judgmental, and as open-hearted as possible. Crisis takes us away from the present reality and into fear, anxiety, irrational thoughts. Mindful skills return us to the present reality and provide safe ground to work from.

After the presentation, Georgie Connett, SAFE Board Chair and Strategic Planner welcomed the audience, a blend of representatives from Youth Bureau, School District, Administration, SAFE Coalition and SAFE Board members, parents, concerned citizens and professionals from other organizations and she thanked Mr. Chassman for his expertise. "This presentation helped the attendees to identify the toll the pandemic has taken on their personal and professional lives and the communities they live in." stated Georgie Connett.

The support the SAFE Agency & LICADD provided during the pandemic and will continue to provide is available-see information below:

The SAFE, Inc agency is located in Glen Cove and can be reached at 516-676-2008.

To learn more about LICADD please visit <https://www.licadd.org>. If you or a loved one is suffering with a substance use disorder please contact the LICADD hotline for help at 1-631-979-1700.

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 and COVID-19 Epidemics at www.safeglencove.org.