

Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:

Dr. Sharon Harris

516- 676-2008

safeglencove@yahoo.com

SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: Americans Seek Mental Health Support as COVID -19 Recedes

During COVID-19, a wave of mental-health crises grew considerably, taxing an already overwhelmed system of health care service. As the pandemic diminishes, a rise in mental health support visits to Emergency Rooms have greatly increased according to a recent article in The Wall Street Journal. As the country appears to be emerging from the worst of the Covid-19 crisis, emergency departments say they are overwhelmed by patients who deferred or couldn't access outpatient treatment, or whose symptoms intensified or went undiagnosed during the lockdowns. Medical professionals maintain it could be years before the full impact of the pandemic on mental health is realized, but a host of studies indicate how strained the system has become.

Emergency visits for patients seeking help for overdoses and suicide attempts rose 36% and 26%, respectively, between mid-March and mid-October of last year according to the U.S. Government Accountability Office in March. Additionally, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) surveys have found that 38% of respondents reported symptoms of anxiety or depression between April of last year and February, up from about 11% in 2019. Children in particular have been negatively affected. School closures have allowed serious mental-health issues to go unnoticed, because teachers, school psychologists and other clinical staff are a primary source of referrals. Even prior to COVID-19, the country faced a shortage of mental-health professionals to serve juveniles; the American Academy of Pediatrics last year estimated the need for child psychiatrists at 47 per 100,000 people, roughly four times the number in practice. Emergency-room visits for mental-health crises among 12- to 17-year-olds increased 31% between 2019 and 2020, the CDC reported in June. Among the same group, emergency-room visits for suspected suicide attempts rose 22% last summer compared with the previous year, and 39% this past winter compared with the previous winter.

Healthcare professionals believe mental-health crisis cases are ending up in emergency rooms in higher numbers in part because outpatient facilities, including private psychiatrists' offices, therapy practices and crisis centers, are saturated with patients whose mental-health problems have exacerbated during the pandemic. "For us, it's definitely a lot of people who either had pre-existing conditions or have

neglected to address their new onset of emotional imbalance,” said Damir Huremovic, a psychiatrist at North Shore University Hospital on Long Island. “Many developed anxiety or insomnia, and they tried to see a provider but no one was taking new patients, and then things sort of just snowballed.”

For patients dealing with depression, anxiety or eating disorders, physicians recommend getting out of the house, seeing people and establishing a normal routine. Anticipated school openings in the Fall will hopefully instill a long awaited routine in displaced children and decrease the need to refer.

The Wall Street Journal is an American business-focused, English-language international daily newspaper based in New York City. For more information please visit www.wsj.com.

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.