

Press Release

June 6, 2022

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:

Dr. Sharon Harris

516- 676-2008

safeglencove@yahoo.com

SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: Most Overdoses Caused by Synthetic Drugs

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), more than 107,000 Americans died of drug overdoses in 2021, the highest number ever recorded. The Pandemic did not help as some people turned to opioids during the earliest days of the pandemic — they felt cut off from the outside world and the stress of COVID-19 led to mental health struggles; they had been in recovery but could no longer go to in-person support meetings.

Today, drugs made in laboratories are responsible for most U.S. overdose deaths, as they are cheaper and quicker for traffickers to make and can be extremely potent. They're also easier for teens and young people to buy, with dealers using social media to sell counterfeit pills laced with the powerful synthetic opioid fentanyl. The two drugs that caused the most U.S. overdose deaths last year — fentanyl and meth — are both produced in labs. Federal data also shows that overdoses are now the leading cause of preventable death among people between the ages of 18 and 45, and since 2001, more than 1 million Americans have died from drug overdoses.

A recent article in The New York Times explains that it is more difficult and more time-consuming to make illicit drugs using natural ingredients — a drug trafficker needs to have the space, for example, to plant the opium poppies necessary for heroin. For synthetic drugs, a trafficker would just need a small lab, which can be set up in a private residence or warehouse with just a few chemists. It's faster to make synthetic drugs, and because of their potency, users won't need as much, meaning traffickers can move smaller amounts more discreetly.

Additionally, social media appears to be playing a big role in acquiring the drug. For many young people, purchasing opioids is as easy as picking up their phone and opening up their favorite social media app as drug dealers maintain a presence on social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Pinterest, TikTok, and emerging platforms like Discord and Telegram. Teens may think they are buying a Percocet or Xanax pill, but law enforcement officials say they are often receiving counterfeit pills that have been laced with fentanyl, which is 50 times stronger than heroin and about 100 times stronger than morphine. Adolescent behavior experts say young people often avoid using

syringes, and if they feel like experimenting with drugs, trying a pill they bought on social media that was dropped off at their house seems like a less-risky venture.

New synthetic drugs are being introduced to Americans all the time, and law enforcement officials, constantly trying to keep up on the latest offerings, might not always know what they are looking for. Experts say instead of specifically focusing on getting drugs off the streets, there also needs to be more treatments available and harm reduction tools.

In April, the Biden administration released its inaugural National Drug Control Strategy, which centers on both fighting drug trafficking and untreated addiction. It calls for expanding access to harm reduction interventions like naloxone and fentanyl testing strips, as well as evidence-based treatment for people at the highest risk of overdosing. Customs and Border Protection is also getting more funding to try to better interrupt the flow of drugs into the United States.

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.