

Press Release

August 22, 2022

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: Opioid Epidemic Growing Due To Overdose and Health Disparity**

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the opioid epidemic caused half a million deaths between 1999 and 2019. But far from abating, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused it to dramatically spike, with more people dying of opioids last year than in any prior year.

The opioid epidemic has traditionally been thought of as one that mostly affects white Americans, and largely in rural areas since pharmaceutical companies targeted these areas to avoid the attention of law enforcement agencies. Another reason why white Americans were more likely to be addicted to opioids was because Black people were much less likely to be prescribed opioids for pain control. New CDC data show that the reason the opioid epidemic is rapidly growing is because of its rapid infiltration into Black communities.

A recently published report from the CDC discusses how the opioid epidemic is increasingly effecting Black communities. In 2020, opioid overdoses rose 30% compared to 2019, leading to 91,799 deaths. However, the increase was not uniformly noted. The death rate among Black Americans increased by 44%, the greatest increase among all racial and ethnic groups, and double that for white Americans. Harvard researchers maintain young Black people between the ages of 15 and 24 saw an 86% increase in opioid death rate in 2020 and Black Americans had a greater death rate from opioids than white Americans for the first time during the entire two-decade history of the opioid crisis.

A major reason for the growing racial divide in opioids is based on who actually gets access to substance use treatment. While only 14% of those who died of opioids received treatment for substance misuse overall, among Black Americans the proportion was 8%, the lowest of all groups. Treatment services for opioid use disorder were severely hit by the pandemic, leading to abrupt closures of services that were serving as lifelines for many users. The opioid epidemic is compounding the existing inequities as well as the rise in fentanyl- a far more dangerous drug. The CDC data shows that the areas with the greatest degree of income inequality had double the death rate from opioids among Black Americans compared to areas with the least income inequality.

Interdisciplinary pain treatments that are evidence-based can provide significant relief for people in chronic pain, and an important goal needs to be ensuring that all patients, particularly those who are already suffering disproportionately, receive access to these therapies.

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](http://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](https://www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition) or visit SAFE's website to learn more about the Opioid Epidemic at [www.safeglencove.org](http://www.safeglencove.org).