

Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE CONTACT:

Dr. Sharon Harris

516- 676-2008

safeglencove@yahoo.com

SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: 2023 Drug Trends, Disorders and Trauma

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Substance Use Disorders involve a wide range of substances and patterns of abuse. However, the abuse of opioid prescription drugs and the rise in overdose deaths it is causing, largely due to the powerful synthetic opioid fentanyl, continues to be the biggest drug issue in America. Polysubstance abuse is also a concern. Prescription painkiller alternatives are being further developed, including approaches that involve various types of therapy. The need to address underlying issues that might lead to drug use, including unresolved trauma and undiagnosed co-occurring disorders, is also coming more into focus.

Fentanyl Trends: Close to 1 million individuals have died from drug overdoses since 1999, according to the CDC. Opioids remain the main driver of drug overdose deaths today, with 82.3% involving fentanyl or a similar synthetic opioid. Fentanyl is largely undetectable and is often cut into drugs such as cocaine, methamphetamine, and fake prescription pills including opioid painkillers and benzodiazepines, like Xanax. The US Drug Enforcement Administration issued a public advisory in August about the dangers of “rainbow fentanyl,” which gets its name from its multicolored appearance. This form of the drug raised concerns that drug dealers were intentionally targeting young people, even children.

In November, researchers at the University of Houston announced they have developed a fentanyl vaccine that blocks the drug from entering the brain, eliminating both the high and the risk of overdose. Human clinical trials are currently underway. As with all medication-assisted treatment (MAT), the vaccine may not be the right option for everyone, and therapy to modify thoughts and behaviors that contribute to drug abuse should be the focus of recovery treatment.

Polysubstance Abuse: Overdose deaths from methamphetamine and other psychostimulant use are also on the rise going into 2023, including and not including synthetic opioid involvement. Many overdoses from fentanyl and meth involve polysubstance abuse, intentionally or unintentionally. Mixing drugs can make the drugs’ effects stronger and even more unpredictable, which is what makes polysubstance abuse particularly dangerous and even

deadly. The CDC's most recent numbers show that more than half of all overdose deaths involve the use of multiple substances.

Dual Diagnosis: With today's growing awareness of mental health issues in general, more attention is being focused on the fact that substance abuse often co-occurs with other mental health conditions, including anxiety disorders, mood disorders, and more. This awareness is helping to improve intake screenings at addiction treatment centers and other behavioral health services facilities, which improves outcomes for people living with addiction. Although it is true that symptoms for both disorders tend to improve when even 1 of the disorders is treated, the best long-term results come from treating both conditions at the same time.

Trauma's Impact: According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), trauma and its effects are also gaining wider acceptance as contributors to the development of mental health illnesses and disorders including substance use disorders. The COVID-19 pandemic and the trauma it caused many individuals has taught us that trauma is a subjective experience that can involve anything from warfare to childhood abuse to social isolation. Being able to identify signs and symptoms of trauma gives health care providers more tools for aiding patients in their recovery from drug or alcohol addiction.

Pain Management: Clinicians are helping individuals manage their chronic pain so that they do not have to rely on prescription painkillers. Cognitive behavioral therapy, acceptance and commitment therapy, relaxation training, and even group therapy have all been shown to be effective treatment options.

Prevention Strategies: Education remains critical for the prevention of substance use and abuse. Young people sometimes perceive prescription drugs to be safer than other drugs. One-quarter of teenagers believe that prescription drugs can be used safely to help them study, and almost 1 in 3 parents believe that attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) drugs can help with a child's academic performance, even if the child does not have ADHD, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration reports. Since COVID, many students and employees report feeling stressed out and overworked. Mental health days are being built into time-off policies for employees as well as for high school and college students. This gives employees and students the chance to take a break from their daily routines and focus on their mental health. Some students are demanding that their schools review their mental health policies. At the end of November, students at Yale sued the school for alleged "systemic discrimination against students with mental health disabilities" regarding the school's withdrawal and reinstatement policies involving students with specific health conditions.

Currently, there are more tools for preventing addiction, supporting mental health, and helping individuals when addiction does develop. A personalized approach often works best, taking into consideration each individual's complete health history and current thoughts and behaviors. As

we gain a better understanding of underlying issues, the stigma surrounding addiction and all mental illnesses will continue to be overcome.

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.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) is a branch of the [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](http://www.hhs.gov). It is charged with improving the quality and availability of treatment and rehabilitative services in order to reduce illness, death, disability, and the cost to society resulting from [substance abuse](#) and [mental illnesses](#). For more information about SAMHSA please visit www.samhsa.gov.

SAFE is the only alcohol and substance use prevention, intervention and education agency in the City of Glen Cove. It's 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.