

Press Release

October 2, 2023

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:

Dr. Sharon Harris

516- 676-2008

safeglencove@yahoo.com

SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: October is Youth Substance Use Prevention Month

In October, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) is observing Youth Substance Use Prevention Month. The need for prevention has never been greater. Studies show that the earlier in life a young person starts using alcohol or other drugs, the greater their lifetime risk of misuse or addiction.

The substance use landscape continues to evolve with the ongoing spread of highly potent synthetic opioids (like illicit fentanyl) in counterfeit pills and the re-emergence of stimulants like methamphetamine. At the same time, there are changing state policies related to alcohol, marijuana, and hallucinogens. Vaping and tobacco products remain readily accessible to young people in many communities and the public continues to learn about the perils and potentials of alcohol, tobacco and other drug use through social media. All of this is transpiring against the backdrop of rising mental health challenges, especially among young people, that are inextricably linked to substance use.

SAMHSA maintains substance use has never been riskier, whether it is someone's first time using, or a long-standing substance use disorder. The risk of overdose is now elevated with any use of an illicit drug, given the potency, lethality, and unpredictability of fentanyl and other additives (such as xylazine) in the illicit drug supply. What remains constant is prevention science and the decades of community-based experience and scientific research that shows prevention works as evidenced by the following:

- Alcohol use among youth has fallen significantly since the 1970s and 1980s, and has generally trended downward over the past few decades. Alcohol remains the most widely used substance among youth, followed by marijuana and nicotine products (including e-cigarettes and other vaping devices).
- Long-term data (from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey and Monitoring the Future study) also show declines in substance use among youth for most substances over the past decade.

- The 2021 National Survey on Drug Use and Health shows that most youth (aged 12-17 years) have never used alcohol, nicotine, or illicit drugs in their lifetime.
 - 77.1 percent have never used alcohol.
 - 83.5 percent have never used nicotine products (tobacco or nicotine vaping).
 - 78.7 percent have never used illicit drugs (including marijuana or misuse of prescription medications).

Research shows that the earlier substance use begins, the more likely it will develop into a substance use disorder that is why it is so critical to provide youth with evidence-based prevention education to prevent initial use as well as delay the onset of use.

SAMHSA's Strategic Prevention Framework puts comprehensive solutions in place for successful prevention strategies which include the following:

- Address youth risk and protective factors
- Operates at the individual, relationship, community, and society levels
- Addresses social determinants of health
- Is tailored to the unique needs of individuals and communities
- Is culturally competent.
- Is sustainable.

Early intervention is vital for youth. Every year that substance use is delayed while the adolescent brain develops, the risks of addiction and substance misuse decrease.

SAMHSA's prevention system includes four elements (4 E's):

- Early action (act early, across the lifespan and the continuum of care).
- Easy access (create and sustain barrier-free access to prevention resources and services).
- Effective delivery (deliver resources and services that are responsive to local needs and based on data).
- Equitable opportunities (develop and support opportunities for everyone to achieve optimal health — regardless of socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, geographic location, disability, and other identities).

According to SAMHSA, prevention saves money. Substance misuse costs the nation hundreds of billions of dollars each year, according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse. Prevention has the potential to reduce those costs dramatically. The average effective school-based program would save an estimated \$18, per \$1 invested, if implemented nationwide.

In time for Youth Substance Use Prevention Month and Substance Misuse Prevention Month, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), through SAMHSA, has awarded \$42.6

million in Strategic Prevention Framework - Partnerships for Success (SPF-PFS) grants to 17 states and 60 communities (located across 33 states). These grants are considered to be a foundational investment for substance use prevention in the U.S. that focuses on preventing substance use initiation and reducing the progression of substance use and related problems by supporting the development and delivery of state and community substance use prevention and mental health promotion strategies. Increasing youth substance use prevention is a key goal in the Biden-Harris Administration's National Drug Control Strategy, and an essential strategy to helping to beat the overdose epidemic.

Substance use prevention is needed now more than ever, as the nation continues to tackle the substance use, overdose, and mental health crises that have deeply impacted young people across our country.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) is a branch of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. 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, Inc. is the only alcohol and substance abuse prevention, intervention, and education agency in the City of Glen Cove and provides evidence-based Life Skills Training, a prevention education program to Elementary and Middle School students and their parents. Its Coalition is concerned about youth substance use and their developing brain. The Coalition is conducting several prevention awareness campaigns entitled. "Keeping Glen Cove SAFE," to educate and update the community regarding alcohol, tobacco marijuana and opioid use and its negative consequences to one's health and wellness. To learn more about SAFE please visit www.safeglencove.org or to learn more about the SAFE Glen Cove Coalition please follow us on www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition.