

Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:

Dr. Sharon Harris

516- 676-2008

safeglencove@yahoo.com

SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: Youth & Fentanyl

Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid that is 50 to 100 times as potent as heroin and morphine and is the primary catalyst of the recent rise in opioid overdoses. Due to its potency, multiple doses of naloxone may be necessary to reverse an overdose. There are two types of fentanyl: Pharmaceutical fentanyl that is used legally to treat severe pain and must be prescribed by a medical provider and illicitly manufactured fentanyl that is frequently associated with overdoses and is often taken with other drugs (polysubstance use).

Youth may be unintentionally exposed to fentanyl in a variety of ways. For example, youth may come into contact with prescribed pharmaceutical fentanyl and fentanyl patches (Duragesic®) at home if they are not stored in safe locations out of reach. They may also come into contact with illicitly manufactured fentanyl (IMF), which is often “laced,” or added to, other drugs to make them cheaper to produce and more addictive for users. IMF is often found in fake or counterfeit pills that look like OxyContin®, Xanax®, Adderall® and other pharmaceutical medications such as liquid products like nasal sprays and eye drops. 1,4 Rainbow fentanyl, which is brightly colored, comes in pill, powder or block form and has been found in 26 states as of August 2022.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), between 2020 and 2021, drug overdose deaths among youth aged 14-18 years increased 20%, and researchers identified fentanyl as the primary cause of this increase. In 2021, 77% of teen drug overdose deaths were linked to fentanyl. Many of these overdoses were due to fake or counterfeit pills made to look like prescription opioids or benzodiazepines and were laced with IMF. Young people can easily purchase fake or counterfeit pills from the internet, and they are commonly advertised and sold on social media. This highlights the importance of prevention education regarding the dangers of fentanyl.

The New York State Office of Addiction Services and Supports (OASAS) advises parents to keep communication around substances open and ask their children what they are seeing online. Young people may think that overdoses only happen to people who frequently use substances or those with a substance use disorder. Help dispel myths about drug overdose and increase youth awareness around the presence and risks of fentanyl and fentanyl-laced products. Overdose can happen to anyone, and Fentanyl is a leading cause of overdose frequently encountered as an unknown additive. Parents should warn to never take pills or other drugs that were not prescribed, and no substance bought online is safe. It is difficult to know what is in substances sold illegally and fentanyl has been found in almost every illegal drug.

OASAS feels it is always carry naloxone as it can reverse an opioid overdose when administered timely. Naloxone is an opioid antagonist that reverses the effects of an opioid overdose to block

the effects of the opioid by attaching to the same receptor and can restore breathing to a person experiencing an opioid overdose. Some overdoses may require more than one dose of naloxone. Naloxone comes in both an injectable form and a needle-free device sprayed into the nostril (e.g., generic naloxone, Narcan®, Kloxxado®). Providers should obtain and carry naloxone as an easy precautionary measure. Naloxone is available in every state and usually available at pharmacies without a prescription, from local community naloxone programs.

The New York State Office of Addiction Services and Supports (OASAS) is a State agency whose mission is to improve the lives of all New Yorkers by leading a comprehensive premier system of addiction services for prevention, treatment, and recovery. For more information about OASAS please visit <https://www.ny.gov/agencies/office-addiction-services-and-supports> or <https://oasas.ny.gov/opioids>.

SAFE, Inc. is the only alcohol and substance abuse prevention, intervention and education agency in the City of Glen Cove. Its Coalition is conducting an opioid prevention awareness campaign entitled, "Keeping Glen Cove SAFE," 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.