

Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SAFE Glen Cove Coalition Parent Committee Advises to Lock Up Your Meds

Lock Your Meds is a national, multi-media campaign designed to reduce prescription drug abuse by making adults aware that they are the "unwitting suppliers" of prescription medications being used in unintended ways, especially by young people.

On April 29th, a presentation was conducted by Brenda Lopez, SAFE Coalition's Parent Committee member regarding the Lock Up Your Meds campaign to parents who participate in SAFE's bilingual Life Skills Training Program facilitated by Mrs. Laurent Caballero. Annually, the Coalition educates community members about keeping their medications safe from unwanted use.

Over the last decade prescription drugs had been a fast-growing drug problem in the United States profoundly affecting the lives of teenagers. Thanks to prevention education programs, 2024 data for youth prescription drug abuse has decreased. According to new data from the Monitoring the Future (MTF) Survey on Adolescent Drug Use, numbers continued to drop or remain stable in 2024, extending unprecedented declines that began during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The 2024 MTF collected data from over 24,000 students in 8th, 10th, and 12th grades across 272 schools, found that abstention rates were low.

Notably, 67% of 12th graders, 80% of 10th graders, and 90% of 8th graders reported no past 30-day use of these substances. In 2017, these rates were 53%, 69%, and 87%, respectively, marking significant improvements for older high schoolers.

Use of any illicit drug other than marijuana declined among 8th graders, dropping from 4.6% in 2023 to 3.4% in 2024, while rates remained stable for older students.

Misuse of prescription narcotics—such as OxyContin—among seniors reached an all-time low at 0.6%, a significant decline from 9.5% in 2004. Meanwhile, cannabis vaping rates held steady, with 17.6% of seniors reporting use in the past year.

Prescription drugs are the most abused substances by teens after marijuana and alcohol. When teens abuse prescription drugs and take them in different amounts or for other reasons than as they are prescribed, they affect the brain and body in ways very similar to illicit drugs.

When prescription drugs are abused, they can be addictive and have harmful health effects such as overdose (especially when taken along with other drugs or alcohol). An overdose is when a drug is swallowed, inhaled, injected, or absorbed through the skin in excessive amounts and injures the body. Overdoses are either intentional or unintentional. If the person taking or giving a substance did not mean to hurt themselves or others, then it is unintentional. Some teens use Adderall® or Ritalin® to try and boost their test performance to improve their grades. Studies show that these stimulants do not help learning when used by people who do not have ADHD.

Ms. Lopez went on to discuss “Generation RX” and the reasons why young people take prescription medication- from their parents or grandparents medicine cabinets. Some reasons are psychological- Pleasure seeking; Wanting to fit in with groups of friends and are in search of acceptance and bonding; Youth do not realize the risks of taking medicines that have not been prescribed specifically for them or the danger of not following a prescription’s directions; Prescription medication is easier to obtain than illegal drugs. Other reasons are misperceptions about the drug and its negative health consequences- Lack of information and a carefree attitude toward the risks involved in using prescription medicines properly; Belief that prescription medicines are much safer to use than illegal drugs; Prescription pain relievers cannot be addictive; There is nothing wrong with using prescription drugs without a doctor’s prescription.

These impacts can be particularly harmful to a developing adolescent brain and body. The human brain continues to develop into early- to mid-twenties. During adolescence, the pre-frontal cortex further develops to enable people to set priorities, formulate strategies, allocate attention, and control impulses. The outer mantle of the brain also experiences a burst of development, helping us to become more sophisticated at processing abstract information and understanding rules, laws, and codes of social conduct. Drug use impacts perceptual skill. Adolescent brains are actively trying to cultivate—and can fracture developing neural pathways. Additionally, as brains are becoming hardwired during adolescence, the pathways being reinforced are the ones that stick. If those pathways include addiction, the impact may lead to life-long challenges.

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), research shows that kids who continue to learn about the risks of drugs at home are up to 50 percent less likely to use drugs than those who are not taught about the dangers. Only 22 percent of teens report discussing the risks of abusing any prescription drug without a doctor’s prescription with their parents.

Parents were encouraged to speak with their children about this important issue. They were advised to keep their medications out of sight like kitchen counters and bedside tables and to be aware of what is in their medicine cabinets in case something goes missing.

All residents are encouraged to dispose of unwanted prescription medications at the Police Department year-round or attend the SAFE Glen Cove Coalition's annual Shed Your Med's event on May 10th at the Police Department to properly dispose of prescription medications and medical supplies that are no longer needed or have expired. The safe disposal of unused and expired drugs supports the need to eliminate the risk of these drugs getting into the hands of young people.

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 prescription drug 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 prescription drug use and the Opioid Epidemic at www.safeglencove.org.

For more information about the Lock Up Your Meds campaign please visit www.drugabuse.gov. or www.lockyourmeds.org.