

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: Children Living with Parents Who Have Substance Use Disorder

According to a recent study published in JAMA Pediatrics, millions of children in the U.S. live in a household with a parent who has either a moderate or severe substance use disorder (SUD). This number amounts to 1 in 4 children with a parent who has addiction. If one-quarter of children in the U.S. have a parent with a substance use disorder, treatment facilities need to be poised and ready to help support those families.

Researchers used data from the 2023 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, a federal survey that estimated the prevalence of substance use and mental health disorders based on the most updated criteria in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-5* (DSM-5). The national survey is managed by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. The study's main finding is significantly higher than previous estimates (7 million in a study originally published in 2022), which had relied on diagnostic criteria from the DSM-IV.

The study also estimated how many children have a parent with a moderate or severe addiction as opposed to mild. Data showed that more than 6 million children have a parent with a mental health condition in addition to a substance use disorder. These estimates are incredibly important to understand the scope of parental substance use disorder in the United States. Another notable finding in the study is that a majority of the parents — 12 million — had alcohol use disorder. While alcohol is more socially acceptable in our society, the study points to a need to pay greater attention to a rising number of children exposed to parental alcohol use disorder.

It's also important to remember that alcohol is actually the leading cause of substance-related deaths in the United States. Alcohol actually kills more people in the U.S. than do opioids every year, but it's a slower death rate. It's a chronic disease process that affects, you know, somebody's liver, somebody's risk of developing cancer. And children of parents with addiction are themselves at a higher risk of various physical and mental health problems.

Young children growing up in homes affected by parental SUD are at increased risk of experiencing impaired caregiving, disruption of parental abilities, unintentional ingestions, and witnessing parental overdose. They are also at a higher risk of developing certain mental health conditions and substance use problems in the long run. Pediatricians caring for a young person who has a parent with a substance use disorder need to make screening for mental health concerns like depression, anxiety, ADHD, all of which we know can be more common in kids of parents with addiction, a high priority.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that pediatricians ask patients and/or parents about substance use in the family in order to educate them about the risks of substance use and connect families to treatment when needed. Parents with addiction love their children and want the best for them, she says, but may not access treatment because of stigma about seeking help

for addiction and barriers to accessing care. For parents with substance use disorder, researchers encourage Pediatricians to discuss safe storage of substances, identification of a safe and sober caregiver for children during periods of active use and provide training in naloxone administration should an unintentional ingestion occur."

Research demonstrates that over three-fourths of people with substance use disorders do not get treatment. Children who are in households with parents don't get help are much less likely to get help themselves. Substance use prevention, intervention and education programs can play a critical role in connecting families in need with lifesaving services.

SAFE is the only alcohol and substance use prevention agency in Glen Cove whose mission is to eliminate alcohol and substance use in Glen Cove. Its Coalition is concerned about youth substance use and exposure as their brains are still developing and is conducting prevention awareness campaigns entitled "Keeping Glen Cove SAFE" to educate and update the community regarding substance use and its negative 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 alcohol, tobacco and other drug use at www.safeglencove.org.