

Press Release

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SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: Encouraging the Community to “Shed Your Meds”

On September 12th SAFE, The City of Glen Cove Mayor’s office and the Glen Cove Police Department partnered on their annual event entitled “Shed Your Med’s”. This prevention program follows the Drug Enforcement Administration’s (DEA) National Prescription Drug Take Back Day – a day that addresses abuse of controlled prescription drugs and safely allows their disposal to avoid youth misuse.

This year over 100 pounds of unwanted medications were collected. Additionally, Detera bags were provided by the New York State Office of Addiction Services and Supports (OASAS) and given to all those who came to dispose of their unwanted medications. The kit allows individuals to safely dispose of medications at home in between Shed Your Meds event. Kits are also available at the SAFE office.

The misuse and abuse of prescription medicine have helped drive the current opioid epidemic, with problematic behavior often beginning during the teen and young adult years. The abuse of prescription opioid pain medicine (like OxyContin, Percocet, fentanyl and others) is linked to increases in the use of illicit heroin, helping drive the addiction epidemic.

Every day, 2,000 teenagers use a prescription drug to get high for the first time. They’re primarily accessing these drugs in homes. It can be as easy as opening a cupboard, drawer or medicine cabinet. Two-thirds of teens who misused pain relievers in the past year say that they got them from family and friends, including their home’s medicine cabinets which is their drug supplier.

According to researchers at Partnership to End Addiction:

- 1 in 4 teens report that they have misused or abused a prescription drug at least once in their lifetime.
- Two-thirds (66 percent) of teens who report abuse of prescription pain relievers are getting them from friends, family and acquaintances.
- Nearly 80 percent of people who inject heroin start by abusing Rx drugs.

As a nation, we’ve become familiar — and comfortable — with the common use of prescription (Rx) and over-the-counter (OTC) medicines. As new medicines for alleviating symptoms come to market, they are heavily marketed and advertised, raising our awareness of the conditions they

treat. As a result, many have grown up associating medicine with solving problems — and have a heightened awareness of their use.

While some teens abuse medicine to party and get high, many are using medicine to manage stress or regulate their lives. Some are abusing prescription stimulants to provide additional energy and increase their ability to focus when they're studying or taking tests. Others are abusing pain relievers, tranquilizers and over-the-counter cough medicine to cope with academic, social or emotional stress.

Teens and other young adults don't necessarily see this behavior as risky. Many believe that since medicine is created and tested in a scientific environment it is therefore safer to use than illicit drugs.

There are real dangers to medicine abuse, just as there are with illicit drugs. Young adults who abuse prescription medicine can experience dramatic increases in blood pressure and heart rate, organ damage, difficulty breathing, seizures, addiction and even death.

These impacts can be particularly harmful to a developing adolescent brain and body. The human brain continues to develop until early- to mid-twenties. During adolescence, the pre-frontal cortex further develops to enable us 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 perception- a skill adolescent brains are actively trying to cultivate—and can fracture developing neural pathways. Additionally, as our 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.

As with any type of mind-altering drug, prescription drug misuse and abuse can affect judgment and inhibition, putting adolescents at heightened risk for HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, misusing other kinds of drugs, and engaging in additional risky behaviors.

Parents are strongly advised to discuss this important issue with their children.

Shed Your Meds is a helpful way to decrease youth risk of prescription medication misuse.

Learn more about National Prescription Take Back Day at https://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/drug_disposal/takeback/takeback.html

The SAFE Glen Cove 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.