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SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: NYS OASAS Cannabis Prevention Toolkit

More states across the United States are legalizing adult-use cannabis. As of August 2023, 44 states in the U.S. have legalized medical cannabis use and 23 states have legalized adult use. In response to this legalization and the ensuing confusion regarding its safety among young people, the New York State Office of Addiction Services and Supports (NYS OASAS) launched a Cannabis Toolkit for parents and mentors, designed to offer resources and information about cannabis and how to talk to young people about the risks of underage cannabis use and the impact it can have.

Conflicting information about cannabis makes it difficult for teens to know how much of a risk it truly is. They may also have heard that there is something called ‘medical cannabis’ that can be used to treat certain medical problems. In school, they may learn about the harmful effects that it can have on youth brain development and yet they may see their favorite celebrity or social media influencer talking about the benefits of cannabis. Where does all this conflicting information leave teens? What are they supposed to believe is true about cannabis? This inconsistency makes it hard for young people to evaluate the risks and consequences of underage cannabis use.

OASAS Commissioner Dr. Chinazo Cunningham said, “Young people are getting mixed messages on cannabis, and parents and other trusted adults should know how to discuss this issue and give young people the information they need to stay safe. It is important to have regular conversations about this topic. Research shows that having these conversations can significantly influence a teen’s decisions regarding substance use.”

The new Cannabis Toolkit is focused on addressing and preventing underage use of cannabis, which can impair learning, short-term memory, decision-making and problem-solving skills, attention, and motivation. It can also lead to physical issues, such as bronchitis or asthma, and increased risk of schizophrenia and other serious mental health disorders.

The toolkit provides evidence-based information and tips for starting and maintaining conversations with youth on things like cannabis potency, types of products, and the impact that cannabis and THC can have on the developing brain. It also offers important information on the risks of underage use, how to model healthy and safe behaviors, and discussing ways to avoid underage use altogether, all of which are hallmarks of OASAS prevention efforts.

The Toolkit is supported by the Office of Mental Health and the NY State Schools Boards Association. The Toolkit will supply parents and guardians with information they need to thoughtfully engage young people in an ongoing conversation on the harmful effects underage use of marijuana can have on their mind and body. The toolkit will also offer useful prevention techniques that young people can use to avoid the underage use of marijuana all together. Students may learn the risks associated with substance use in classrooms, however, their

decision-making can often rest on their peer group preferences, social pressures, and the possibilities of misinformation in social media feeds. This toolkit will provide needed structure and direction for meaningful dialogue between adults and youth about substance use which is a risk factor in youth development that can have a negative impact on learning, attention, and health.

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 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>. To get the free Toolkit, available in both English and Spanish please visit https://oasas.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2024/04/cannabis-toolkit-0_0_0.pdf.

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 cannabis use- especially in youth as their brains are developing. The Coalition is conducting a prevention awareness campaign entitled “Keeping Glen Cove SAFE; Underage Marijuana Use,” to educate and update the community regarding marijuana 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 Cannabis/Marijuana use at www.safeglencove.org.