

Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:

Dr. Sharon Harris

516- 676-2008

safeglencove@yahoo.com

SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: August 31st is International Overdose Awareness Day:

“Together We Can”

Every August, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) commemorates International Overdose Awareness Day (August 31, 2024) and Overdose Awareness Week (August 25 to August 31, 2024) to remember the individuals, families, and communities who have all been impacted by overdose. This year’s theme is “Together We Can”.

Worldwide there is an international drug overdose crisis. Over the last twenty years drug overdose deaths have increased significantly in many parts of the world. Each year a record number of deaths are reported, predominantly driven by the misuse of opioids, often in combination with other drugs including benzodiazepines, stimulants and alcohol.

In 2021, an estimated 296 million people – one in every 17 people aged 15-64 – had used a drug in the past 12 months, a 23 per cent increase from 2011.

Opioids account for two-thirds (69 per cent) of drug overdose deaths. The estimated number of people using opioids globally has doubled from 26-36 million people in 2010 to 61.3 million in 2020. There are currently multiple ongoing opioid overdose epidemics in the world; one is driven by the increased presence of the synthetic opioid fentanyl in the United States and Canada, while another in North Africa, West Africa, the Near and Middle East and South-West Asia is due to the non-medical use of the synthetic opioid tramadol.

Some of the new drugs available today – most notably synthetic opioids and amphetamine-type stimulants – are more dangerous than their counterparts were 20 or even 10 years ago. There were 1,235 new psychoactive substances reported in 142 countries and territories between 2013 and 2023. Opioids are the fastest-growing and most harmful group of new psychoactive substances – there were 88 different types recorded globally in 2021, an increase from just one in 2009.

U.S. 2023, provisional data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimated 105,303 drug overdose deaths, an decrease of 2 per cent from 2022. Two-thirds of these deaths

involved synthetic opioids, primarily fentanyl. The United States reported an age-adjusted mortality rate of 32.4 per 100,000 population, for the 15–64-year age bracket for 2021.

International Overdose Awareness Day is the world’s largest annual campaign to end overdose, remember without stigma those who have died and acknowledge the grief of the family and friends left behind and stimulates action and discussion about evidence-based overdose prevention and drug policy. The campaign also acknowledges the profound grief felt by families and friends whose loved ones have died or suffered permanent injury from a drug overdose. International Overdose Awareness Day spreads the message about the tragedy of drug overdose death and that drug overdose is preventable.

The guiding principles of International Overdose Awareness Day: Overdose can and must be prevented; Overdose prevention solutions exist – let’s use them; Criminalizing drug use hasn’t worked. Compassionate alternatives must be pursued; Policy and legislation must exist to protect individuals and communities, and ensure basic human rights and needs are met; Everyone has a right to respectful and comprehensive health care; Only a community-wide effort can end overdose.

The goals of International Overdose Awareness Day are: To provide an opportunity for people to publicly mourn loved ones in a safe environment, some for the first time without feeling guilt or shame; To include the greatest number of people in International Overdose Awareness Day events, and encourage non-denominational involvement; Provide information about the issue of fatal and non-fatal overdose; Send a strong message to current and former people who use drugs that they are valued; Stimulate discussion about overdose prevention and drug policy; Provide basic information on the range of support services that are available; Prevent and reduce drug-related harm by supporting evidence-based policy and practice; Inform people around the world about the risk of overdose.

SAFE is the only alcohol and substance use prevention 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.