

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 9, 2024

CONTACT: Dr. Sharon Harris 516- 676-2008

safeglencove@yahoo.com

SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: What Parents Should Know About The Teen Brain and Substance Use

Not everyone who uses alcohol or other drugs becomes addicted. Youth often use substances to alleviate stress with school, friends, family or out of mere curiosity. The risk of developing a Substance Use Disorder (SUD) varies from individual to individual in terms of recreational use, coping skills, or self-medication. Addiction is a brain disease having its beginnings in adolescence when the brain is not fully formed. Using alcohol or other drugs on a regular basis (1-2 X per month) at 15 or younger, increases the likelihood of having a problem later in life by 40% over those who waited until their 20's.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): Five tips parents should know about adolescent brain development:

- The brain's "front end," the part above the eyes, exists to slow us down or stop our impulsive behaviors. It considers the risks and benefits of our actions, and it helps us "hit the brakes" when we consider doing things that are too risky.
- This front part of the brain is still developing connections to the rest of the brain until adulthood, so adolescents' brains lack some of the "wiring" that carries "brake" or "stop" messages to the rest of the brain.
- Drugs of abuse are often available to adolescents. These drugs feel good, but they can be very harmful. Lacking some of the wiring for the "stop" message, adolescents' brains may not fully weigh the risks of drug use.
- The two drugs that cause the most death are also the most available drugs: tobacco and alcohol. Late adolescence, before the brain is fully matured, is the peak time for developing dependence on these (and other) drugs.
- Heavy drug use during times of critical brain development may cause permanent changes in the way the brain works and responds to rewards and consequences. Therefore, it is important to begin to address a developing substance use problem as early as possible.

Parents can identify the warning signs of alcohol and substance use: Does your child have mood swings, poor grades, new friends or no friends, truancy, isolation from the family? Parents are encouraged to avoid lecturing as this can be discouraging and often ineffective. Parents are advised to be curious and listen actively and to use open-ended questions to explore their child's perspectives on substances. Lastly, conversations should happen on a regular basis not just when situations or concerns arise.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is a federal agency that conducts and supports health promotion, prevention and preparedness activities in the United States, with the goal of improving overall public health. To learn more about CDC please visit www.cdc.gov.

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 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.