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In the April 2017 Advocacy Newsbriefs, NYS PTA has chosen to spotlight certain priority issues in the enacted NYS Budget. One of the issues spotlighted is the very important issue of heroin and opioid abuse, prevention and treatment.

- Increases for heroin and opioid abuse and treatment including several new initiatives were included in the enacted state budget.
- The overall state investment for these programs is now \$200 million.
- Unfortunately, the proposal to pilot recovery high schools was NOT included in the final budget.
- This is still a very high priority to NYS PTA and we will continue to work on this issue.

<http://www.nyspta.org/Advocacy/ANewsbriefs-0417.cfm#Wellness>

The state budget includes \$23 million for Long Island for anti-opioid programs and addiction treatment. <http://www.newsday.com/news/health/andrew-cuomo-23m-for-li-for-anti-opioid-programs-1.13493563>

<http://www.newsday.com/news/region-state/new-york-devotes-200m-to-fight-heroin-and-opioid-abuse-1.13495836>

It is unfortunately well known that heroin and opioid abuse is prevalent across the nation, and especially on Long Island. In fact, it was reported a couple of weeks ago in Newsday that nearly 500 people died from opioid overdoses on Long Island in 2016 (the most ever) with the powerful drug fentanyl leading the way. The article went on to note:

“The opioid epidemic is not exclusive to Long Island with drug overdose deaths, particularly opioid fatalities, also rising nationally. In 2015, more than 52,000 people died, and of those fatalities, 63 percent involved prescription or illicit opioids, according to data released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in December. Since 2000, more than 300,000 people have died from opioid overdoses, according to the CDC. The victims are frequently young adults.”

<http://www.newsday.com/long-island/nearly-500-people-died-on-li-from-opioid-overdoses-in-2016-1.13387679>

Police departments and law enforcement agencies have realized that arrests alone will not combat this epidemic. They are taking a four-pronged approach to deal with the epidemic: enforcement, awareness, education and prevention.

The Ugly Truth, a program that has gained in popularity since being introduced in March 2015, is one of the tools Suffolk County is using to combat the opioid epidemic. Since its inception, 41 forums attended by more than 3,500 people, including 700 teens, have taken place. More than 3,000 people have been taught how to administer naloxone, commonly known by its brand name Narcan, a now widely available treatment for opioid overdose with 2,400 kits of the drug distributed. My home school district, Half Hollow Hills, sponsored one of these programs last year.

<http://www.newsday.com/long-island/suffolk/suffolk-takes-aim-at-opioid-abuse-with-ugly-truth-forums-1.13014115>

Other Educational Opportunities:

There are many programs that can be brought into communities which can further help educate parents and children about this awful epidemic. I am lucky enough to live in a community where such educational forums and programs have been held. My home school district's PTA Council, HHH PTA Council, has a 'Parent Resource/Task Force' committee which brings programs into the district to educate parents on many topics. This committee was able to partner with and co-sponsor with our community library (Half Hollow Hills Community Library) two programs within the past two school years on the topic of substance abuse. The first forum, entitled "Save a Life... Start the Conversation" was held in March 2016. Panelists spoke about their knowledge and/or experiences with substance abuse, whether as a police officer, a clinician, a person in recovery, or a family in recovery (who established a foundation to prevent lives lost to opiate/heroin addiction in memory of their son, who died of a heroin and fentanyl overdose.) The program covered such topics as signs/symptoms, brain development, Prevention, Social Host laws, the Good Samaritan law, legal consequences, trends, recovery, and personal stories. There was a Q&A at the end of the program. It was well attended, having over 150 people in attendance.

Due to the success of this program, it was decided to follow up this year with "Part 2" of the "Save a Life... Start the Conversation" program. The theme for this year's program, which occurred this past week (on April 19th), was: **"It's Never Too Early to Talk About Substance Abuse & Prevention"**. This program was geared more towards middle school aged children and the topics included trends, signs/symptoms, brain development, having 'The Talk', and legal consequences. There was a Q & A at the end of the program.

http://hnhlibrary.org/Newsletter/past-issues/HHHCLMar_Apr2017.pdf

The most recent panel did not include a person in recovery or a family in recovery. This time, the moderator was the Project Director at Huntington Drug & Alcohol Counseling Center. The panel included a professional development and education specialist from LICADD (Long Island Council on Alcohol and Drug Dependence), a parenting educator and coach, a licensed clinical

social worker and the Town of Huntington Youth Services Coordinator, and a Suffolk County Police Officer for the law enforcement viewpoint. The program was well attended by many middle school aged children as well as their parents along with other people in the community. The police officer in attendance spoke about how Long Island is the epicenter of heroin and opioid abuse, and that many of the overdoses are occurring in higher income communities. The prevalence of the prescribing of opioids was discussed. Many doctors and dentists continue to prescribe drugs such as Vicodin, Percocet, Oxycodone and other such drugs after simple tooth extractions, minor surgeries, etc. This continues to be a problem.

In Conclusion: As New York State PTA continues to speak to our legislators about this very important issue, as well as other issues, it is my hope that local PTAs and communities will continue to have these extremely important conversations to save lives. Another eye-opening link regarding the epidemic on Long Island is contained here: <http://www.suburbanheroin.com/>