

HC DrugFree

HC DrugFree: Keeping Howard County *in the KNOW!*
...knowledge is power, so just say KNOW

"To plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow."

-Audrey Hepburn

Dates to Remember in August

Event moved to September 27: [HCPSS Family Academy Kick-Off](#)

August 25: First Day of School at HCPSS

August 31: [International Overdose Awareness Day](#)

HC DrugFree's Team Is Working Hard This Summer

HC DrugFree's team is on the move this summer sharing information with youth, families and community leaders across Howard County. Volunteer with us throughout the year to earn Community Service Hours. Contact Admin@hcdrugfree.org to ask about upcoming volunteer opportunities.

□ Pictured below: HC DrugFree's staff and youth volunteers at a recent Leadership U event at Howard Community College where they shared about substance use prevention and the power of youth leadership while building a safer community.



UMD Adds Naloxone to AED Boxes on Campus

The University of Maryland made a major move to fight opioid overdose deaths: Naloxone, a safe and effective overdose reversal medication, is now available in all 150 public AED (Automated External Defibrillator) boxes across campus.

Anyone can access the medication (most AED boxes are not alarmed) and it's safe for all ages, including children and pregnant people. UMD's Health Center, in partnership with the Maryland Department of Health, led this effort to save lives and break down the stigma surrounding substance use.

In addition to stocking AED boxes, naloxone is available at the campus pharmacy, through harm reduction tabling events, overdose response trainings, and even a 24/7 wellness vending machine.

New MD Laws

Each July, new laws passed by the Maryland General Assembly go into effect, impacting everything from health and education to driving and drug safety.

This year's updates include changes related to youth protections, impaired driving, mental health, and substance misuse prevention: all areas closely tied to HC DrugFree's work in the community.

To keep you informed, we've created a quick-reference spreadsheet highlighting the laws most relevant to local families and prevention efforts.

[HCDF Summary of MD Laws, Effective July 1, 2025](#)

□ Full list of laws: [Maryland General Assembly website](#)

Whether you're a parent, educator, or student, staying updated helps keep our community safer and stronger.



Cannabis Branding Is Misleading Teens Across the Country

Fruit-flavored. Locally made. Vegan. These buzzwords and colorful packages may look like health snacks, but they're actually cannabis edibles, and teens are noticing.

A new study from Washington State University shows how gummy-like packaging and trendy branding make cannabis-infused products feel "natural" or "safe" to youth, even when warning labels are present. Teens in the study said they'd proudly show off the packaging on social media or even display it in their rooms.

This is a wake-up call for parents, policymakers, and educators. Cannabis marketing may not say it targets teens, but its design often does.

[Read article](#)



Howard County Police: 911 Flagging Program

Howard County police routinely respond to calls for persons with an identified developmental, intellectual, degenerative or physical disorder or disability who have wandered off or are in a state of crisis.

With the 9-1-1 flagging program, police can be provided with valuable information and ways to help before they arrive.

[Request a flag on your address](#)



Lights, Camera, Addiction: On-Screen Tobacco Fuels Youth Nicotine Risk



Even as smoking rates drop, tobacco use is making a comeback where it counts: in the shows and music teens love.

Truth Initiative's latest "Lights, Camera, Addiction" report reveals just how deeply tobacco is embedded in today's entertainment:

- 7 of the top 15 streaming shows for ages 15–24 featured tobacco in 2023.
- The share of binge-watched shows with tobacco increased from 64% to 70%
- 41% of the top-grossing movies in 2023 included smoking - marking the biggest increase since 2002
- Nearly 1 in 4 top music videos still show smoking, totaling around 5 billion views on YouTube

These numbers aren't just concerning. They're dangerous. Research shows that teens exposed to tobacco on-screen are up to three times more likely to start vaping. That's especially troubling as nicotine addiction harms brain development and worsens anxiety and depression, all at a time when youth mental health is already at a crisis point.

Parents and caregivers: talk with your teens about what they're watching. Help them understand that what seems trendy or rebellious on screen can lead to real-world harm.

Senior Call Check: Daily Support for Maryland's Older Adults

Living alone shouldn't mean being alone. The Maryland Department of Aging's Senior Call Check program offers free daily check-in calls or texts to Marylanders 65 and older, helping ensure their safety and peace of mind. If a participant doesn't respond after three attempts, a trusted alternate or local services are contacted to follow up.

This simple yet powerful service is expanding soon into Senior Call Check and Social Connections, with more ways to stay in touch and accessible features for older adults and people with disabilities.

Learn more or enroll by calling 1-866-50-CHECK (1-866-502-0560).

[More information](#)



Decode Emoji Drug Code on World Emoji Day

Emojis may seem harmless, but some are being used to hide serious dangers. July 17 was World Emoji Day, so this is a perfect time to raise awareness.

Drug traffickers often use emojis to secretly advertise and sell fake prescription pills and other illegal drugs to teens through social media. For example:

- ☐ = Fake oxycodone
- ☐ = Cocaine
- ☐ = General pills or drugs
- ☐ = High potency
- ☐ = Dealer advertising

These symbols may look playful, but they're often linked to substances laced with deadly fentanyl and methamphetamine.

Visit [DEA Emoji Drug Code Decoded](#) to learn more.

Teen Advisory Council Registration for 2025-26

HC DrugFree invites **all Howard County students in grades 8-12** to join our Teen Advisory Council (TAC) Meeting.

Students: If you have not submitted a new 2025-26 registration, please complete [this form](#) to register for the coming school year. **Even if you have been a member for several years, we need a new registration each school year.**

Members of TAC attend our monthly meetings and serve as student ambassadors in their schools and in the community.

Why join TAC?

- Earn Community Service Hours
- Gain experience for job & college applications

- Volunteer opportunities year round
- Be a leader and role model in Howard County

[Learn more](#)

Stay In the Loop: Follow Us Online!

Want real-time updates and powerful stories from our community?

Follow HC DrugFree on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn to stay informed about important events, helpful resources, and prevention news as it happens.

From last-minute event info to tips that keep your family safe, our social media is your fastest way to stay connected. Join the conversation: be informed, inspired, and part of the movement!

One-Click Links!

Facebook: [HC DrugFree](#)

Instagram: [@hc_drugfree](#)

LinkedIn: [HC DrugFree](#)

Twitter: [@HCdrugfree](#)

Donate Today!



Your support allows us to provide our FREE resources and programs to the community. Please donate today by visiting hcdrugfree.org/donate or mailing a check to: HC DrugFree, 5305 Village Center Drive, Suite 206, Columbia, MD 21044

[Donate here!](#)

Resources

The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline:

Marylanders who are experiencing a mental health or

substance use crisis should call or text 988. Learn more at 988.maryland.gov. Maryland veterans and their loved ones can call 988 and press 1 to transfer to the Veterans Crisis Line. Press 2 for Spanish.



Free Narcan Training, Fentanyl Test Strips, Xylazine Test Strips Available in Maryland:

Free training and test strips available across Maryland. [Access map](#) and [Learn more](#)

[Additional Resources](#)

For more information, contact

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