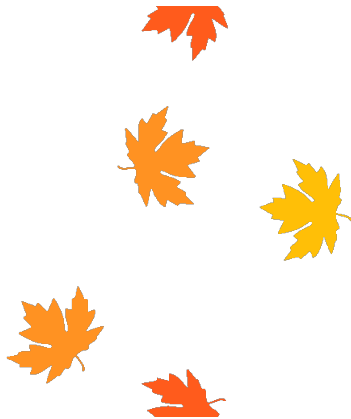


# HC DrugFree

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

Fall is proof that change can be beautiful.



## Dates to Remember in September

September - National Recovery Month  
September - Suicide Prevention Month  
September 22 - First Day of Fall  
September 27 - **HCPSS Family Academy Kickoff**

## Teens: Register Today!

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

To RSVP/register to receive the **Monday, September 29 Zoom meeting link**, [click here](#). Meetings will run from 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. Each meeting has a unique link, so members must RSVP/register before each meeting. A University of Maryland college student and former TAC member will facilitate this 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.](#)

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## HCPSS Family Academy Kickoff

Stop at HC DrugFree's table on Saturday! The Family Academy Kickoff is a districtwide event, being held on Saturday, September 27 from 9 a.m. to noon at Oakland Mills High School. It is open to all Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) families and will feature an informative session with HCPSS Superintendent Bill Barnes; resource tables hosted by HCPSS offices and local organizations; and information on programs, resources and services available throughout the school year. Childcare and language access will be provided. [Learn more.](#)

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## FREE Parenting Classes

HC DrugFree's FREE Parenting Classes are back. Be sure to register.

The Fall 2025 series will run (Tuesdays and Thursdays): November 11, 13, 18, 20 and December 2 from noon to 1:30 p.m. on Zoom.

Raising preteens and teens is tough. Wouldn't it be great if adults could take a class that taught us how to help our kids avoid risky behaviors, all while learning how to say NO to drugs and alcohol? There is!

Guiding Good Choices® is an evidence-based, interactive prevention program that helps you build a stronger bond with your child, while also providing skills proven to reduce the risk of children engaging in substance use or other risky behaviors.

Learn how to:

- Prevent Drug Use in Your Family
- Develop Healthy Beliefs and Clear Standards
- Avoid Trouble and Respond to Peer Pressure
- Manage Conflict and Express Feelings Constructively
- Strengthen Family Bonds
- And More!

[Learn more.](#) [Register.](#)

## FREE CLASS FOR PARENTS AND GRANDPARENTS



### Taking HoCo Families to the Next Level

Guiding Good Choices® is an evidence-based, interactive prevention program that helps you build a stronger bond with your child, while also providing skills proven to reduce the risk of children engaging in substance use or other risky behaviors. Learn how to:

- Prevent Drug Use in Your Family
- Develop Healthy Beliefs and Clear Standards
- Avoid Trouble and Respond to Peer Pressure
- Manage Conflict and Express Feelings Constructively
- Strengthen Family Bonds
- And More!

This series of five Zoom classes is for **parents, guardians, and grandparents** of 9-14 year olds, but will consider slightly older or younger children on a case by case basis. Adult **or** child must be a Howard County resident.

**Class Dates: Tuesdays/Thursdays:**

**November 11, 13, 18, 20 and December 2**

(Participants are encouraged to attend all 5 sessions.)

**Time:** Noon - 1:30 p.m.

**Register:** <https://tinyurl.com/GGC-Fall2025>

**Learn more:** [hcdrugfree.org/currentevents](https://hcdrugfree.org/currentevents)

**HCDrugFree**  
Empowering the Community



[Download and print flyer.](#)

## Important Changes! Medication Collection on Saturday, October 25

Save the date, plan to volunteer, and read below to learn about changes to our October collection:

HC DrugFree's next drive-thru medication collection will be held on Saturday, October 25 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the Wilde Lake Village Center parking lot in Columbia. Howard County students with current Teen Advisory Council registrations on file can earn Community Service Hours.

Pills may remain in bottles. No need to remove labels. Safely dispose of:

- Prescription Medication
- Over-the-counter meds
- Vitamins
- Vape Devices with batteries removed
- Inhalers
- Pet Medication
- and more...

**Update: We will not collect sharps at this event. To dispose of sharps:**

*The Howard County Bureau of Environmental Services recommends that you place used (or unused) needles in an empty plastic bottle (e.g., laundry detergent bottle) to protect the trash collection crew. When the bottle is full, add the cap and put the bottle in your curbside trash.*

[More information and volunteer.](#)

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## National Recovery Month: Start with Caring

September is National Recovery Month. Doing things that lift you up makes #Recovery REAL (Restores Every Aspect of Life). ☐☐☐

Do you know the guiding principles of recovery? Find them on [SAMHSA's website](#).



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## Suicide Prevention Month

September is Suicide Prevention Awareness Month. Learn the warning signs, normalize help-seeking, and let people know there are proven treatments that work.

Check out SAMHSA's #SuicidePreventionMonth toolkit → [samhsa.gov/suicide-prevention-month](https://samhsa.gov/suicide-prevention-month)



## In the *KNOW* about Tianeptine: "Gas Station Heroin"

The FDA is sounding the alarm on a dangerous and growing trend: products containing tianeptine, often marketed as supplements or “nootropics” and sold in gas stations, convenience stores, vape shops, and online under names like Tianaa, Zaza, Neptune’s Fix, Pegasus, and TD Red.

Known as “gas station heroin”, tianeptine is not FDA-approved for any medical use in the U.S. and can be highly addictive. Despite being promoted as mood boosters or enhancers, misuse has been linked to:

- Agitation, confusion, drowsiness, vomiting
- Severe health outcomes including coma, respiratory depression, seizures, and death

In 2024, a cluster of illnesses and deaths in New Jersey was tied to tianeptine products mixed with synthetic cannabinoids.

The FDA urges the public, especially parents and caregivers, to be aware of this fast-growing threat to youth and to talk openly with teens about the dangers. If you suspect someone is experiencing adverse effects from tianeptine, call the Poison Help Line at 1-800-222-1222.

## NEW DEA Vaping and Marijuana Fact Sheet

It's popular among youth, but that doesn't make it harmless. Learn about paranoia, panic attacks, and other effects of vaping marijuana concentrates with our fact sheet, available in both [English](#) and [Spanish](#).

Included are the history of the drug and intake method, common street names, effects, and more.

Researchers also studied the link between vaping and college student health, finding that those who vaped reported fewer nights of restful sleep, more alcohol use, and more depressive symptoms. [Link to study.](#)



## □ Maryland Releases 2023 DOSE Annual Report

The Maryland Department of Health has published the [2023 Drug Overdose Surveillance and Epidemiology \(DOSE\) Annual Report](#).

While statewide suspected non-fatal overdoses decreased by 15% in 2023, more than 25,000 ED visits were reported, the highest since 2019.

Highlights include:

- Baltimore City (107.7 per 10,000) and Washington County (52.4 per 10,000) had the highest EMS call rates.
- Black individuals in these jurisdictions faced significantly higher overdose rates compared to white individuals.
- Naloxone was most often administered by lay persons (41.7%) and law enforcement (33.1%) before EMS arrival.

The report underscores the critical need for overdose prevention strategies, naloxone access, and community education.

Families can also help prevent overdoses by safely storing and monitoring all medications in the home.

The 2024 DOSE report will be released later this year.

## Hiring! New Position!

New position!! Accepting applications.

HC DrugFree is looking for a self-motivated Howard County professional to **take the lead on many day-to-day management duties as well as lead educational projects/programs**. Success in this position may lead to career growth and advancement opportunities.

All candidates must pass a background check and possess strong organizational skills, writing skills, and computer skills. A flexible schedule is a must. Transportation required.

Do you have the experience, skills, and energy to lead HC DrugFree - or know someone who does? If so, [apply here!](#)

## Fewer People Drinking

An August Gallup poll showed a record low 54% of Americans say they drink alcohol. This coincides with a growing belief among Americans that moderate alcohol consumption is bad for one's health.

The good news is that young people are drinking less because they have been learned about the dangers in school (and in classes like our Life Skills classes for HoCo students). [Read more.](#)

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## In the *KNOW* about Deceptive Drug Advertising

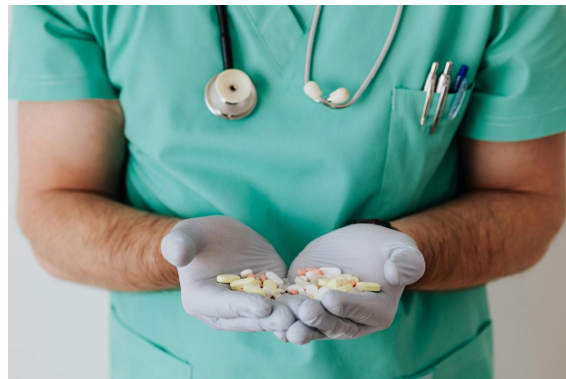
The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has [released guidance](#) aimed at boosting the development of non-opioid treatments for chronic pain. The goal is to provide safer alternatives, reduce reliance on opioids, and help curb prescription misuse.

### What's in the Guidance

- Provides clarity to drug developers on how to test and prove non-opioid pain medicines in clinical trials.
- Suggests using broader pain condition categories in some cases, rather than focusing only on narrow conditions.
- Highlights the importance of patient-reported outcomes, focusing on how patients feel and function, not just clinical measurements.
- Notes that regulatory incentives can help speed up the development of non-opioid treatments.

### Why This Matters

- About 1 in 5 U.S. adults with chronic pain are still prescribed opioids because safer alternatives are limited.
- By defining clearer pathways for non-opioid treatments, new therapies may reach patients more quickly, reducing the risks tied to long-term opioid use.





## Alcohol and Cancer: Is It Time For Truth On The Label?

Most Americans don't realize that alcohol is a Class I carcinogen: the same category as tobacco and asbestos. Yet current U.S. alcohol labels fail to mention this. Studies show even light drinking raises the risk for at least seven cancers, including breast, colorectal, and liver cancer.

The U.S. Surgeon General and World Health Organization now recommend updating warning labels to reflect this proven risk. Clear, visible labels could help people make informed choices, just as graphic tobacco warnings have done for smoking. [Learn more.](#)



About Alcohol

## Fentanyl: What You Need To Know

Fentanyl is a powerful synthetic opioid, often mixed into other drugs without users knowing. Even a tiny amount—just a few grains—can be lethal. [This flyer](#) helps you recognize its characteristics.

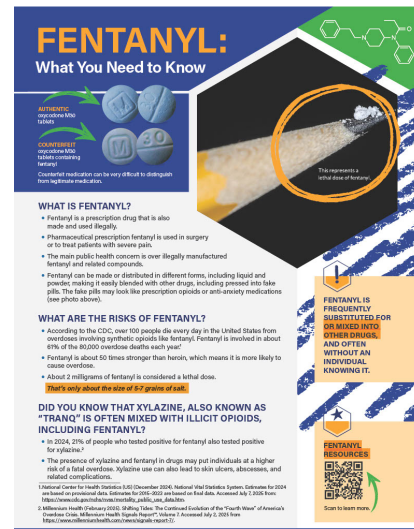
### Key Points:

- About 50× stronger than heroin
- 79% of teen overdose deaths in 2023 involved fentanyl
- Mixing with other substances increases risk
- Keep all medications safely stored away from youth and others

If an overdose occurs:

- Call 911 immediately
- Administer naloxone (Narcan) if available
- Use fentanyl test strips to detect it in other drugs

Stay informed, stay safe, and educate youth about these dangers.



## Safe Storage of Meds



**100 FREE medication storage boxes** will be given away on Saturday, October 25 at the next drive-thru Medication Collection event in the Wilde Lake Village Center.

Safe medication storage isn't just about having a lock: it's about putting one more barrier between



your loved ones and potential harm.

If you don't have a medication storage box, try using a coded lockbox, a locking tackle box, or even a locked toolbox, all items you may already have at home!

When in doubt, dispose of unused medications properly. It's one of the simplest ways to protect children, teens, and even pets.

- ☐ Safe storage = prevention
- ☐ One small step can make a big difference
- ☐ [Learn more about disposal](#) to keep your loved ones safe.

## 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/](http://hcdrugfree.org/donate/) or mailing a check to: HC DrugFree, 5305 Village Center Drive, Suite 206, Columbia, MD

[Donate here!](#)

## What Do You Think?

Please take our 2-second survey to let us know what you think of the content provided in this newsletter!

[Take Our Survey](#)

## Resources

### **NAMI Howard County - Mental Health Services:**

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Howard County is dedicated to improving the lives of individuals affected by mental health conditions and their loved ones. [Download brochure.](#)

### **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](https://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:**

The Howard County Health Department offers a free training so you can be prepared in case of an opioid overdose. Sign up for your free training and Narcan kit today: [Learn more.](#)

## [Additional Resources](#)

For more information, contact

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