

# HC DrugFree

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

“Teaching kids to count is fine,  
but teaching them what counts is best.”

- Bob Talbert

## Dates to Remember in September

September 8 - [988 Day](#)

September - National Recovery Month

September - Suicide Prevention Month

September 27 - [HCPSS Family Academy Kickoff](#)

September 29 - [Teen Advisory Council Meeting](#)

## Today: 988 Day

988 Day is a day of action held annually on September 8 (9/8). The goal is to raise awareness about the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline through a variety of creative activities spearheaded by communities, organizations, and individuals. [Learn more.](#)



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.

## Teens Attend HoCo's IOAD Event



HC DrugFree teen volunteers attended Howard County's 9th annual International Overdose Awareness Day (IOAD) event on Sunday, August 31 at St. John's Episcopal Church in Ellicott City. The event featured several community resources, a live demonstration of life-saving efforts including the use of Naloxone/Narcan, and a candlelight vigil. IOAD is a time to remember those lost to substance use disorder and to celebrate those who are in active recovery.

Between August 2024 to July 2025, there have been [1,338 overdose deaths](#) in MD and 23 in Howard County.

## September 29: Teen Advisory Council Meeting

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

**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.**

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.

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](#)

## National Recovery Month: Start with Caring



With the right treatment, support, and resources, recovery is possible! National Recovery Month (Recovery Month), which started in 1989, is observed every September to promote and support new evidence-based treatment and recovery practices, the nation's strong and proud recovery community, and the dedication of service providers and communities who make recovery possible. [Learn more.](#)

## Suicide Prevention Month



September is Suicide Prevention Awareness Month - a time to raise awareness, promote hope, and normalize help-seeking. Suicide affects millions of people every year, yet too many struggle in silence. Whether you're facing challenges, supporting a friend or loved one, or are looking to help, your voice matters.

This month is dedicated to recognizing the warning signs for suicide, encouraging open conversations about mental health, and connecting people to proven treatment and resources. When we stand together in

strength, dignity, hope, and purpose, we can make a difference—we can help save lives. [Learn warning signs.](#)

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## Save the Date: Medication Collection, Saturday, October 25

Save the date and plan to volunteer: 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.

Be sure to read future updates for **important changes to items being collected!** More info to come!

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## Report Hazing at Your College

There is a new nationwide database of hazing incidents, resources, and news - all in one place.

This free, publicly accessible database lets you search nearly 1,500 colleges and universities across all 50 states plus Washington, DC, and Puerto Rico.

Find publicly available reports of hazing incidents, summaries of state laws, and links to related news coverage. Families, students, and campus communities can stay informed to make better decisions and support a safe campus environment. [Learn more.](#)

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## Marylanders Overdosing at Home

Do you know what's happening in your home? More than half of Maryland overdose deaths (52-59%) occur in the decedent's own home, and another 10% occur in someone else's home.

[New report released](#) by the Maryland Department of Health

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## Tips for Talking to Youth

[Download guides](#) tailored for having conversations with preschoolers, elementary school students, middle school students, high school students, or young adults about the dangers of substance use.

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## New Fentanyl Safety Resource by NIDA

HC DrugFree is pleased to share a new educational flyer from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), developed in partnership with CADCA: [“Fentanyl: What You Need to Know.”](#) This simple, easy-to-read resource highlights the urgent dangers of fentanyl and provides families and

communities with facts that can save lives.

## Why This Matters

- Fentanyl is extremely potent: About 50 times stronger than heroin and 100 times stronger than morphine.
- Hidden risk: It's often mixed into pills, powders, or other drugs without people knowing.
- Overdose can happen quickly: Just a tiny amount of only a few grains can be fatal.
- Along with learning about fentanyl's risks, practicing **safe storage of all medications and disposing of unused medicines** properly are critical steps to keep youth and communities safe.

# FENTANYL:

## What You Need to Know



**AUTHENTIC**  
oxycodone M30  
tablets

**COUNTERFEIT**  
oxycodone M30  
tablets containing  
fentanyl

Counterfeit medication can be very difficult to distinguish from legitimate medication.



This represents a lethal dose of fentanyl.

### WHAT IS FENTANYL?

- Fentanyl is a prescription drug that is also made and used illegally.
- Pharmaceutical prescription fentanyl is used in surgery or to treat patients with severe pain.
- The main public health concern is over illegally manufactured fentanyl and related compounds.
- Fentanyl can be made or distributed in different forms, including liquid and powder, making it easily blended with other drugs, including pressed into fake pills. The fake pills may look like prescription opioids or anti-anxiety medications (see photo above).

### WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF FENTANYL?

- According to the CDC, over 100 people die every day in the United States from overdoses involving synthetic opioids like fentanyl. Fentanyl is involved in about 61% of the 80,000 overdose deaths each year.<sup>1</sup>
- Fentanyl is about 50 times stronger than heroin, which means it is more likely to cause overdose.
- About 2 milligrams of fentanyl is considered a lethal dose.

**That's only about the size of 5-7 grains of salt.**

### DID YOU KNOW THAT XYLAZINE, ALSO KNOWN AS "TRANQ" IS OFTEN MIXED WITH ILLICIT OPIOIDS, INCLUDING FENTANYL?

- In 2024, 21% of people who tested positive for fentanyl also tested positive for xylazine.<sup>2</sup>
- The presence of xylazine and fentanyl in drugs may put individuals at a higher risk of a fatal overdose. Xylazine use can also lead to skin ulcers, abscesses, and related complications.

1. National Center for Health Statistics (US) (December 2024). National Vital Statistics System. Estimates for 2024 are based on provisional data. Estimates for 2015–2023 are based on final data. Accessed July 7, 2025 from: [https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/mortality\\_public\\_use\\_data.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/mortality_public_use_data.htm).

2. Millennium Health (February 2025). Shifting Tides: The Continued Evolution of the "Fourth Wave" of America's Overdose Crisis. Millennium Health Signals Report™, Volume 7. Accessed July 2, 2025 from <https://www.millenniumhealth.com/news/signals-report-7/>.

**FENTANYL IS FREQUENTLY SUBSTITUTED FOR OR MIXED INTO OTHER DRUGS, AND OFTEN WITHOUT AN INDIVIDUAL KNOWING IT.**

**FENTANYL RESOURCES**



Scan to learn more.

View The Flyer

HC DrugFree Is Hiring!



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!](#)

If you have questions, please put them on your application. No phone calls or emails.

## FDA Updates Opioid Labels to Highlight Risks

The FDA now requires stronger warnings on all opioid pain medications to emphasize the risks of addiction, misuse, overdose, and death. Labels will also guide safe discontinuation, note interactions with other medications, and highlight tools like naloxone for overdose reversal.

These [updates](#) are part of ongoing efforts to ensure patients and providers make informed decisions and to reduce opioid-related harm in communities.



Remember to secure your medications too! Safe medication storage isn't just about having a lock: it's about putting one more barrier between your loved ones and potential harm.

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
- ☐ Keep your loved ones safe. Learn more about safe disposal[here](#).

## Share Your Thoughts

The Howard County Health Department is recruiting adults and youth to participate in focus groups that will help guide their substance use prevention efforts. To register and for more information, call the Health Department at 410-313-6112.

## 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 21044

[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

### **Gambling Addiction:**

Contact 1-800-GAMBLER (1-800-426-2537) for free, confidential support 24/7 or visit [helpmygamblingproblem.org](https://helpmygamblingproblem.org).

### **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.](#)

## Additional Resources

For more information, contact

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