

HC DrugFree

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



**HC DrugFree's Team
Wishes You a Safe and Happy Thanksgiving**

And don't forget...

Be sure family, friends, and pets visiting your home can't access your medication. Keep your children, grandchildren, and all of your loved ones safe this holiday week and throughout the year.

[Learn More about Medication Storage](#)

Dates to Remember

December 2 - Final Class for Parents, Guardians & Grandparents

December 8 - [Teen Advisory Council Meeting](#)

January 12 - [Teen Advisory Council Meeting](#)

April 7, 2026 - [HoCo Student Film Festival/HC DrugFree Category Submission Deadline](#)

May 1, 2026 - [HoCo Film Festival at Miller Library](#)

If You Missed Our Slideshow

If you missed it, check out [the highlights](#) from our October 25 Take Back Day event. Again, thank you to our amazing volunteers, our law enforcement and other partners, and the hundreds of community members who brought their items to our collection site. You all showed up and made a difference in our community!



HoCo Student Film Festival - HC DrugFree Category

□ HoCo Student Film Festival – Now Open!

HC DrugFree is proud to sponsor a category in the 2025-26 HoCo Student Film Festival. Students are invited to create a PSA for this year's theme:

“In The Know: Fake Pills, Real Danger”

Inspired by the DEA's "One Pill Can Kill" campaign, this category focuses on the risks of counterfeit pills, especially those laced with fentanyl.

Key Details

- Submission Deadline: April 7, 2026
- Festival Date: May 1, 2026, 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. at Miller Library
- Length: 30 seconds–2 minutes (plus a 10–30 second closing screen)
- Must Include: HC DrugFree logo, website (hcdrugfree.org),
Admin@hcdrugfree.org

For requirements and past winners, visit our [website](#) and the [Film Fest website](#).



FREE Class for Parent/Grandparents

Howard County parents, guardians, and grandparents:

The final class of the Fall 2025 series will be held on **Tuesday, December 2** from noon to 1:30 p.m. on Zoom. All classes are FREE. HC DrugFree strongly encourages HoCo adults with students in K-12 to join us.

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

Learn how to:

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

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

Safe Storage of Meds

Medication boxes help families safely store prescription and over-the-counter medications, reducing the risk of accidental ingestion and misuse. If you did not receive a storage box from us, we encourage you to use your own secure location, such as a locked cabinet, drawer, or safe, to store medications safely in your home.



Sharps Disposal

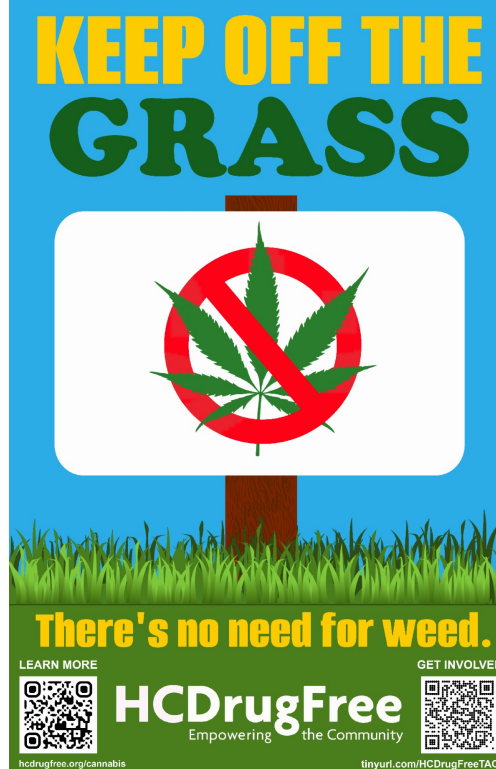
To dispose of sharps:

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.



A [recent Atlantic article](#) highlights how modern marijuana is far stronger than in past decades, with many products containing extremely high THC levels — sometimes up to 90% in concentrates. This jump in potency is linked to increased risks for youth, including paranoia, dependence, and psychotic symptoms. Experts are calling for clearer regulation and labeling to protect consumers, especially young people.



□ “Good Boy” and What It Really Means

Among middle and high school students, the phrase “good boy” has evolved from a term of praise into a sarcastic or mocking comment, often used to signal obedience or assert peer dominance. While some teens use it jokingly, recipients may feel belittled or embarrassed, which can affect self-esteem and mental health. This is just one example of how teen slang can carry hidden social meanings. For a broader look at current youth language, see the [Parents’ Teen Slang Dictionary](#)

□ New Sedative Showing Up in the Opioid Supply

A [recent mass overdose](#) in Baltimore’s Penn North neighborhood revealed that a powerful animal sedative called medetomidine was mixed into street opioids. Eleven people overdosed and several were hospitalized. This drug is especially dangerous because it is not an opioid, and naloxone (Narcan) does NOT reverse its effects.

Why This Matters For Opioid Safety:

- Medetomidine is now being detected in street fentanyl in multiple locations.
- When combined with opioids, it can cause extreme sedation, slowed heart rate, and dangerously low blood pressure.
- A person may not wake up even after naloxone because naloxone only treats the opioid portion of the overdose.
- Overdose response may require rescue breathing and immediate medical care.

Take-away: Today’s opioid supply is unpredictable and often mixed with other dangerous substances. Even if naloxone is used, always call 911 — the

situation may involve more than just an opioid.



⚠ New and Extremely Potent Opioids Are Spreading: Nitazenes

A new class of synthetic opioids called nitazenes is showing up in the drug [supply in the U.S., Europe, and Australia](#). These drugs can be far more potent than fentanyl, with some estimates suggesting they are up to 40 times stronger. People often have no idea they're taking them, because nitazenes are usually mixed into other opioids or pressed into counterfeit pills.

Why This Matters:

- Nitazenes can cause rapid, severe respiratory depression.
- Overdose risk is extremely high even with tiny amounts.
- They are difficult to detect without advanced testing.
- They increase the unpredictability of an already unstable opioid supply.

Take-away: The opioid crisis is evolving again. With nitazenes entering the supply, overdoses may become even more dangerous. Always call 911 in any suspected overdose and use naloxone, it can still reverse the opioid effects, but multiple doses may be needed.

Hiring!

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.

In MD, cannabis is legal for adults 21+, certified medical patients, and their caregivers with valid government-issued ID. Cannabis purchased in Maryland must remain in-state. Cannabis remains illegal under federal law.

Maryland's Recreational Cannabis Law

- Must be 21 years of age or older to purchase cannabis from a licensed dispensary with a government-issued photo ID
- Cannabis can only be consumed in private homes and on private property. Use is prohibited in public places or in motor vehicles
- Cannabis cannot be transported over state lines or sent through the U.S. mail
- Two indoor cannabis plants can be grown per household, out of view.

Safe Storage

Cannabis and all medications should be kept away from children, pets, and others. Always store cannabis in its original child-resistant packaging, which includes THC content and warning labels. For added safety, consider using lock-boxes or safes, available online and at some HC DrugFree events.

Learn More: [Be Cannabis Smart: Maryland Guide 2025](#)



In the *KNOW* about Opioids & Medetomidine



New research shows a growing number of people who use fentanyl are also using methamphetamine, creating an especially dangerous combination. While fentanyl is a powerful opioid that slows breathing, meth is a stimulant that speeds up the body. Together, they can mask each other's effects — increasing the risk of a fatal opioid overdose because the person may not realize how much fentanyl they've taken.

Key Points:

- More overdose deaths now involve both fentanyl and stimulants like meth. Meth can make someone feel more alert despite having taken a dangerous dose of opioids.
- When the stimulant wears off, the full depressant effects of fentanyl can

hit suddenly.

- There are no FDA-approved treatments for meth use disorder, making recovery harder.

Take-Away:

The opioid crisis continues to evolve. Fentanyl mixed with meth increases overdose risk and complicates treatment and recovery. Always call 911 in any suspected overdose and use naloxone — it still reverses the opioid portion of the overdose.

⚠️ Kratom Drink “Feel Free” Raises Concerns Over Addiction, Misleading Marketing

A growing concern is emerging about Feel Free, a beverage that contains kratom, which is a plant with opioid-like effects. Sold in small blue bottles in gas stations, vape shops, and online, this product is being marketed as an alcohol alternative or wellness tonic.

What’s Going On:

- Users report developing dependence, consuming multiple bottles per day, and experiencing withdrawal symptoms when they try to stop.
- Labeling has been unclear, with early advertisements not always disclosing the presence of kratom or warning of possible risks.
- Because kratom is unregulated, some versions of the drink may have concentrated or more potent ingredients.

What You Can Do:

- If you come across products like this, read the label carefully and take note of any dosage warnings.
- Be aware of signs of addiction, such as needing more to feel the same effects or experiencing discomfort when not using.
- Talk with friends or family about the risks, especially with teens and young adults who may be drawn to these “wellness” drinks.
- Always store substances safely and out of sight, especially from younger people in the home.

[Learn more](#)



TEEN ADVISORY COUNCIL

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

To RSVP/register to receive the **Monday, December 8 Zoom meeting link**, [click here](#). Meetings 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. Save the date for the Monday, January 12 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!](http://hcdrugfree.org/donate/)

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

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:

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](#)



Free Support Meetings:

Looking for a list of Alcoholics Anonymous meetings in the Howard County area? [Learn more](#)

[Additional Resources](#)

For more information, contact

Joan Webb Scornaienchi
Executive Director
HC DrugFree
5305 Village Center Drive, Suite 206
Wilde Lake Village Center
Columbia, MD 21044
Admin@hcdrugfree.org
www.hcdrugfree.org



HC DrugFree | Wilde Lake Village Center 5305 Village Center Drive, Suite 206 | Columbia, MD 21044 US

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)



Try email marketing for free today!