

HC DrugFree

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



♥We love & appreciate YOU!♥

Dates to Remember

February 14 - [Valentine's Day](#)
February 15-23 - [Random Acts of Kindness Week](#)
February 25 - [Free Life Skills Classes - Day #1 of 8](#)
March 2 - [Teen Advisory Council Meeting](#)

Thousands Gathered to Focus on Prevention

HC DrugFree's Executive Director, Joan Webb Scornaienchi joined thousands of prevention-focused colleagues at the 2026 Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA) National Leadership Forum, held Feb 2–5 in National Harbor, MD.

The event focused on "Resilient Communities, Lasting Change," addressing substance misuse prevention with over 100 workshops and Capitol Hill

advocacy. Key themes include adapting to funding shifts, addressing new intoxicants, and uniting coalition leaders for long-term community health.

The Forum began with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA's) 22nd Annual

Prevention Day focusing on the theme "Telling the Prevention Story," aiming to highlight successful prevention, recovery strategies, and evidence-based practices. As the largest federal gathering dedicated to substance use prevention, the event brought together thousands of stakeholders, including practitioners, community leaders, and scientists.

This annual event:

- Explores current, emerging, and innovative strategies, policies, programs, practices, and research.
- Includes the Prevention Action Center, with exhibits and resources.

Robert F. Kennedy (RFK) Jr., the United States Secretary of Health and Human Services, was the keynote speaker at SAMHSA's Prevention Day. He has been in recovery for 43 years and continues to attend support meetings. He began as a cocaine addict in his early teens and has lost several family members to overdoses.

According to Kennedy, substance use disorders costs \$93 billion a year in direct costs, and the collateral costs are \$920 billion annually. He stressed that the real costs are broken families, lost potential, and the impact on communities. Kennedy shared a message of understanding and hope. [Read more.](#)



[Play RFK Jr.'s Keynote Address.](#)

On Prevention Day, Joan caught up with friends in the Prevention field from SAMHSA, CADCA, and across MD, and of course, HC DrugFree's partners at the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA).

Pictured with Joan is Sean Fearn, Chief of Community Outreach with the DEA.





Safe Storage Makes A Difference

**Safe Storage
Makes A
Difference.**

Protect What
Matters

HCDrugFree

Valentine's Day is about showing love to the people who matter most. One simple way to protect your family is by storing medications safely. Keeping prescriptions and over-the-counter medications locked, out of sight, and out of reach helps prevent accidental misuse and protects children, teens, and loved ones in your home. Love means care, and care means safe storage.

Teen Advisory Council Meeting

We Love Our



Teen Advisory Council

HC DrugFree

Free! 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, March 2 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.

There will be no April meeting because we have other teen events scheduled, so save the date for May 4 meeting. If you have not submitted a 2025-26 registration, please complete [this form](#). 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.](#)

FREE! Classes for HoCo Parents, Guardians & Grandparents

HC DrugFree will again present this popular parenting class for Howard County parents, guardians, and grandparents. The curriculum is written for adults with children between 9-14, but we believe it is appropriate for families with children in K-12. Adult or child must be a Howard County resident.

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!

Here are some **comments from parents who participated in previous classes:**

“I think this class is **incredibly relevant to all parents & should be mandatory for parents and kids alike**. The dangers of addiction and alcoholism are so real, and so tragic. Talking about these things is the only way children will know what is right vs. wrong. I come from a family where ‘talking’ was not encouraged, and communication was ineffective. I am making sure to teach my kids about these dangers myself, which is so much more powerful than just learning about it from other peers. This class presented by professionals, coupled with discussions at home, should be a solid deterrent for kids presented with risky behaviors in social situations.”

“**Super helpful sessions, would recommend to parents of middle-school children.**”

“I felt this class **gave me a lot of ideas of how to approach different situations with my child and a lot of tools to work with my child on making good choices.**”

Class dates: April 14, 15, 21, 22 and an optional class on April 28. This program will meet via Zoom for 5 classes, and adults are encouraged to attend all 5 sessions.

Click [here](#) to learn more or register [here](#). Please include any questions or comments on the registration form.

High School Students: Great Opportunity!

We have an exciting opportunity for Howard County high school students!!



Join our "**Spring 2026 Instructional Team**" on February 25, March 4, 11, 18, 25, April 8, 22, 29.

Time: 5:15 p.m. to 6:45 p.m. on Zoom.

HoCo Teens: Join Our Instructional Team

HC DrugFree is providing another series of FUN and interactive skills-based classes designed to promote positive health and personal development for students in grades 6 to 9. **High school participants (grades 9-12) earn Community Service Hours** by assisting our college instructors throughout the course. You can act as a mentor and role model, while continuing to practice your own personal development skills. **Register now** using the link below!

The curriculum is designed to strengthen student abilities in the following areas:

- Self-Image & Self-Improvement
- Social Skills
- Resolving Conflicts
- Coping with Uncomfortable Feelings
- Personal Self-Management Skills
- Evaluating Advertising & Entertainment
- Drug Resistance Skills
- And MUCH MORE!!!

Meeting via Zoom on Wednesdays 5:15 p.m. - 6:45 p.m. on: February 25; March 4, 11, 18, 25; April 8, 22, 29

Learn more: [HCDrugFree.org/currentevents](https://www.HCDrugFree.org/currentevents)

HCDrugFree 443-325-0040
 Empowering the Community LifeSkills@hcdrugfree.org
 www.HCDrugFree.org
Funding provided by the Howard County Health Department, MDH, and SAMHSA

Earn Community Service Hours for your time as well as mentor younger students and **add this leadership opportunity to your resumes/college applications.**

[Register here.](#) [Learn more.](#) [Print high school flyer.](#)

Our team will be encouraged to join at 4:45 p.m. (30 minutes before class starts) to get briefed on that day's class topics and provide feedback on a special project. Team members **MUST** remain on camera! Positive role models need to be seen and fully engaged!

Don't want to be on the Instructional Team? No worries. Of course, high school students not interested in serving on our team are very welcome to attend the classes to gain the knowledge. See update below.

Free! Life Skills Classes for HoCo Students



HC DrugFree will provide another series of FUN and interactive skills-based classes designed to promote positive health and personal development. This curriculum was designed for **students in grades 6 to 9**, but for slightly younger or older students, we will consider each request. **High schoolers** also have the opportunity to volunteer to assist our instructional team of college instructors and earn community service hours. See update above.

This program will use developmentally appropriate, collaborative learning strategies so students will learn skills that have been shown to help resist high-risk behaviors including substance use (vaping, alcohol and other drugs) and more. [Learn more and register.](#)

Dates: February 25, March 4, 11, 25, April 8, 22, 29

Time: 5:15 p.m. to 6:45 p.m. on Zoom

Flagging in HoCo

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.

For more information, contact the Community Outreach Division at 410-313-2207 or HCPDOutreach@howardcountymd.gov.

To request a flag on your address, click [here](#).



In The *KNOW* about Fentanyl



Safe storage is a critical prevention step. Locking up prescription medications, keeping them out of reach, and properly disposing of unused or expired drugs can help prevent accidental exposure, misuse, and diversion. These simple actions can save lives and protect families.

Counterfeit pills continue to pose a serious and growing risk in communities across the country. These pills are often made to look like legitimate prescription medications and may even be packaged in real prescription bottles, making them difficult to identify. Recently, DEA Houston agents seized counterfeit pills containing deadly fentanyl that were being sold locally, highlighting how widespread and deceptive this issue has become.

What makes counterfeit pills especially dangerous is that **you cannot tell what they contain by appearance alone**. A pill that looks familiar or “safe” can contain a lethal dose of fentanyl, even if it resembles a common prescription medication. This puts not only people who intentionally misuse drugs at risk, but also children, teens, and other family members who may accidentally access unsecured medications.

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, 7–8:30 PM 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](#).



Valentine's Gift for HoCo Teens and Families

A graphic for donations. On the left, there's a pattern of purple and green dots. Text reads: "HC DrugFree needs your support! Help us help Howard County". Below this is the website "www.hcdrugfree.org/donate/" and a QR code. To the right is a photo of a group of people in green shirts holding signs in front of a building. A speech bubble with a heart icon is positioned between the QR code and the photo.

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!](#)

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

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](#)

Free Support Meetings:

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

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](#)

[Additional Resources](#)

For more information, contact

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