

HC DrugFree

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

**May your troubles be less
and your blessings be more.
And nothing but happiness
come through your door.**

-Irish Blessing



Dates to Remember

- March 18, 25, April 8, 22, 29 - [Free Life Skills Classes](#)
- March 20 - First Day of Spring
- March - [Problem Gambling Month](#)
- March - [Women's History Month](#)
- March - [Self-Injury Awareness Month](#)
- March - [Developmental Disability Awareness Month](#)
- April 7 - [HoCo Film Festival/HC DrugFree Category Submission Deadline](#)
- April 25 - [Drive-Thru Medication Collection](#)
- May 1 - [HoCo Student Film Festival at Miller Library](#)

St. Patrick's Day

St. Patrick's Day is a time for celebration, but before heading out, it's important to remember the risks that can come with drinking, large gatherings, and peer pressure. Whether you're attending a parade, heading to a party, or just enjoying the holiday, keep these safety tips in mind.

Ways to Celebrate Without Alcohol

- Cook a traditional Irish meal – Try Irish stew, soda bread, or colcannon with friends and family.
- Enjoy Irish culture – Attend an Irish dance class, listen to traditional music, or learn about Ireland's history.
- Host a game night or movie night – A fun way to celebrate with friends.

Plan Ahead for a Fun & Safe Celebration.

Large crowds, alcohol, and late nights can create risky situations. Make a plan in advance with your group, set expectations, and keep each other accountable. You don't need alcohol to enjoy St. Patrick's Day, embrace the traditions, and celebrate safely.



Flagging in Howard County

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.

[Request a flag](#) on your address.



The Rise of Online Peptide Injections: What Parents and Teens Should Know



[Peptide injections are becoming a popular trend on social media](#), where influencers promote them for muscle growth, faster injury recovery, anti-aging, and weight loss. However, many of the peptides being advertised and sold online are not approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), raising concerns among health experts.

Peptides are short chains of amino acids that play roles in many biological processes. While some peptide-based medications are approved and prescribed by doctors, many of the products promoted online have not been properly tested for safety or effectiveness. Some websites sell these substances labeled for “research purposes,” yet they are widely marketed on social media for personal use.

Because these products are unregulated, experts warn they may contain incorrect dosages, undisclosed ingredients, or contaminants. This means users may be exposing themselves to unknown health risks without proven long-term benefits.

Certain peptides, including those promoted for injury recovery or athletic performance, are gaining attention among young athletes and fitness communities. In addition, unapproved or copycat versions of popular weight-

loss medications are also appearing online, [prompting federal health officials to issue safety warnings.](#)

Teens may be particularly vulnerable to these trends due to pressure around appearance, fitness, or sports performance. Parents and caregivers can help by talking with teens about health misinformation on social media and encouraging them to consult a medical professional before using any substances marketed for weight loss, muscle building, or anti-aging. The bottom line: products sold online or promoted by influencers may not be safe, even if they appear popular or widely used. Staying informed and asking questions can help teens make healthier decisions.

Peptides, weight-loss medications, and other injectable drugs should always be stored securely and out of reach of teens and children, since improperly stored medications can be misused, shared with friends, or accidentally ingested.

[Read more on our website.](#)

Ready to Quit Tobacco?

Quitting tobacco is one of the best things you can do for your health, and you do not have to do it alone. The Maryland Tobacco Quitline offers free, personalized support to help you take the first step and stay on track.



Why use the Quitline?

- Free and confidential support
- Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- Open to individuals ages 13 and older
- Free nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) may be available to help manage cravings

A healthier, tobacco-free future starts with one step. Reach out today and start your quit journey.

Get started today:

Call 1-800-QUIT-NOW

Text READY to 200-400

Visit SmokingStopsHere.com to enroll online and access helpful tools and resources.

Join Us on April 25: Medication Collection - FREE Boxes

The next drive-thru Medication Collection in the Wilde Lake Village Center will be held on Saturday, April 25 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Once again, **100 FREE medication storage boxes** will be distributed. A 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.



Save the date to volunteer and dispose of your medications! Visit our website for [more information](#) or to [volunteer](#).

FREE! Classes for HoCo Parents & Grandparents

FREE PARENTING CLASS



Taking HoCo Families to the Next Level

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!

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. [Learn more](#) or [register](#). Please include any questions or comments on the registration form.

High School Students: Opportunity!

Our Spring 2026 Life Skills classes are underway, and we have already completed the first three sessions. The Instructional Team learned about understanding media messages and are now starting an interactive poster and data visualization project where they create prevention campaigns based on real data.

Howard County high school students are still welcome to join our Spring 2026 Instructional Team to help support the college students teaching the classes and mentor younger participants during the upcoming sessions.

This is a great opportunity to:

- Earn Community Service Hours
- Mentor younger students
- Gain leadership experience for resumes and college applications

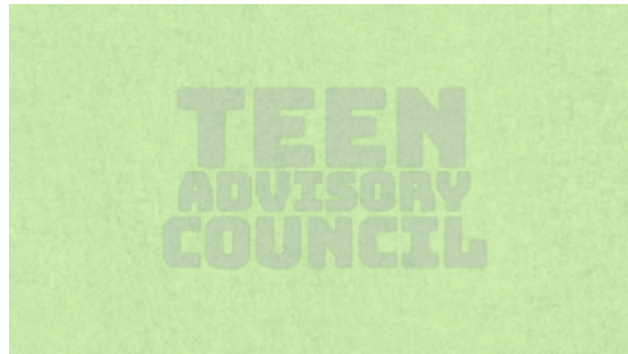
Remaining Class Dates: March 18, March 25, April 8, April 22, April 29

Time: 5:15 p.m. – 6:45 p.m. on Zoom

Instructional Team members are encouraged to join at 4:45 p.m. (30 minutes before class) for a short briefing on the day's activities and to provide feedback on a special project. Team members must remain on camera to serve as visible, engaged role models for younger students.

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

Teen Advisory Council Meeting



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

There will be **no April meeting** because we have other teen events scheduled, so save the date for May 4 TAC meeting and be sure to [volunteer for our Saturday, April 25 medication collection.](#)

Students: 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.](#)

HoCo Student Film Festival - HC DrugFree Category

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](#).



Student Filmmakers

Submit your film to the HoCo Student Film Fest by April 7 for your chance to win the 2026 HC DrugFree Category!

hcdrugfree.org/hoco-filmfest

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.*

New Dashboard Tracks Opioid Use in Howard County

In the *KNOW*... **OPIOIDS**



The Howard County Health Department has launched an interactive Substance Use Dashboard to help residents better understand local trends related to opioids and other substances. The dashboard provides a snapshot of overdose data and other indicators to help guide prevention, treatment, and community response efforts.

The tool includes visual data on fatal and non-fatal overdoses, geographic risk patterns, and trends over time, helping public health officials identify where resources and outreach may be needed most.

An interactive Overdose Risk Map highlights areas of Howard County with higher levels of overdose incidents and other risk factors. These insights help the county focus prevention strategies, treatment programs, and community partnerships where they can have the greatest impact.

Local data already shows encouraging signs. In recent years, fatal opioid overdoses in Howard County dropped from 41 in 2022 to 29 in 2023, while non-fatal overdoses decreased by 37%, reaching a five-year low. These improvements reflect ongoing prevention, treatment, and harm-reduction efforts across the community.

Community members, educators, and organizations can use the dashboard to stay informed and support data-driven conversations about substance use prevention.

View the dashboard here:

<https://www.howardcountymd.gov/health/substance-use-dashboard>

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](#)

Donate Today!



HCDrugFree
needs your support!
Help us help Howard County

www.hcdrugfree.org/donate/



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?

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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