

HC DrugFree

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



What Are You Planning?

If you are planning for a year, sow rice;
if you are planning for a decade, plant trees;
if you are planning for a lifetime, educate people.

— Chinese proverb

National Substance Use Primary Prevention Month



To unite communities across the country to protect our youth from addiction and stop substance use before it starts, a [White House Proclamation](#) has designated August 2026 as National Substance Use Primary Prevention Month.

With a focus on evidence-based primary prevention, as well as providing proactive education to children, the initiative aims to safeguard young people and build a healthier and safer future.

HoCo's Overdose Awareness Day Event

International Overdose Awareness Day brings a global community together to take action on overdose and is held each year on the last day of August. For 25 years, International Overdose Awareness Day has brought people together to remember those lost and to take action to save lives.

Howard County's next event will be held on Monday, August 31 from 6:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at St. John's Episcopal Church at 9120 Frederick Road in Ellicott City.

Join HC DrugFree's team to celebrate recovery, honor those lost to overdoses, and learn about the wealth of resources in Howard County to help combat substance use disorder and support recovery.

Participate in art therapy, listen to speakers in recovery and those honoring loved ones lost, learn from our Fire Department as they demonstrate how an overdose response is handled, and engage with representatives working in the recovery community.

HCPD: H.A.S.T.E.



As students return to school, Howard County police are working to ensure that children, parents and teachers arrive safely. Through an annual back-to-school initiative known as H.A.S.T.E. (Helping Arriving Students Through Enforcement), officers will focus on enforcing driver and pedestrian safety in school zones.

Increased traffic patrols will be in place on roadways surrounding elementary, middle and high schools for the first several weeks of the school year. Officers will focus on drivers who are speeding, failing to stop for pedestrians or driving distracted. They also will be checking for seat belt and child safety seat use to ensure all occupants are properly restrained.

Police are also reminding drivers that buses serving the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) have been outfitted with [external cameras](#). The purpose of the program, which launched in 2021, is to ensure student safety by discouraging motorists from passing buses illegally. The state of Maryland's fine for illegally passing a school bus is \$250.

Additionally, the department's [speed camera program](#) is designed to encourage drivers to slow down in school zones and has tiered fines ranging from \$40-425 based on speed. The cameras are rotated among various school zones in the county, which are posted in advance and updated every week at hcpd.org. The site also offers additional information on all the department's automated enforcement programs and answers to frequently asked questions. The police department will continue to conduct traffic safety education and enforcement efforts throughout the school year.

HC DrugFree is Hiring

Joan Webb Scornaienchi is stepping aside after 17 years. If you are interested in serving as HC DrugFree's next Executive Director, apply today.

The ideal candidate will bring strategic vision, nonprofit leadership with grant writing/fundraising experience, and a passion for advancing the organization's mission and impact.

For additional information, please visit our [employment page](#) or contact the board at: Board@hcdrugfree.org

The Midnight Screen Crisis

Late-night screen time is quietly fueling a widespread sleep crisis among teenagers. Recent research tracking adolescent phone habits reveals that nearly half of all U.S. teens are using their smartphones between midnight and 4:00 a.m. on school nights. The continuous stream of notifications, social media scrolling, and high mental stimulation keeps young brains alert when they should be resting, directly disrupting natural sleep cycles and delaying sleep onset. Over time, these late-night digital habits accumulate into severe, chronic sleep deprivation that negatively impacts mood, emotional regulation, academic performance, and overall mental well-being.

Because sleep is vital for healthy adolescent brain development, experts stress the importance of establishing clear household boundaries around technology at night. High-dopamine activities like scrolling or texting make it nearly impossible for teens to wind down naturally before bed. Families can help protect their children's sleep quality by implementing screen-free wind-down routines an hour before bedtime and charging mobile devices outside of the bedroom overnight to eliminate midnight temptations. [Read the full story.](#)

Teens: Register for 2026-27



HC DrugFree's Teen Advisory Council (TAC) brings together motivated high school students from across Howard County who are passionate about leadership, prevention, advocacy, and making a positive impact in their schools and communities.

Members meet monthly to help create prevention campaigns, provide youth perspectives on substance misuse prevention, assist with community events, develop social media content, and strengthen peer-to-peer education efforts throughout the county.

A new application form is now open for the 2026–27 school year. All students interested in joining TAC, including current members who would like to remain active next year, must complete the new form. Whether you are returning or applying for the first time, we encourage you to sign up and get involved!

[Learn more](#) and [apply here](#).

Stay In the Loop: Follow Us Online!

Follow HC DrugFree on Facebook, Instagram, X, 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](#)

X: [@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!](#)

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.



Additional Resources

For more information, contact

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