



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

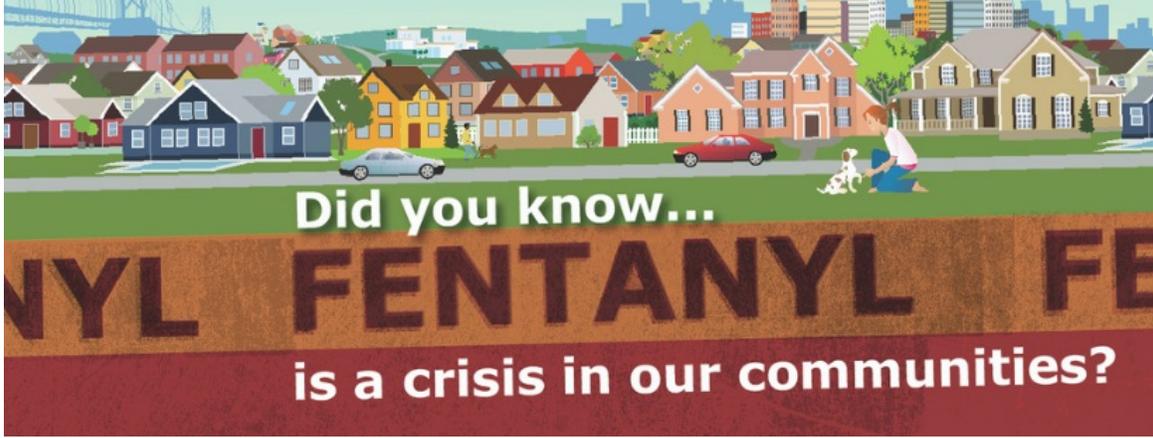


Tragic Milestone: 100,000+ Deaths in One Year

Overdose deaths in the U.S. jumped nearly 30% in the last year and topped an estimated 100,000. President Joe Biden called it “a tragic milestone” in a statement, as administration officials pressed Congress to devote billions of dollars more to address the problem. “This is unacceptable and it requires an unprecedented response,” said Dr. Rahul Gupta, Director of National Drug Control Policy.

"What we're seeing are the effects of these patterns of crisis and the appearance of more dangerous drugs at much lower prices," Dr. Nora Volkow, Director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse, told CNN. "In a crisis of this magnitude, those already taking drugs may take higher amounts and those in recovery may relapse. It's a phenomenon we've seen and perhaps could have predicted."

Experts say the increased availability of the deadly opioids, particularly [fentanyl](#), is a major driver, accounting for 64% of overdose deaths. [Read more.](#)



This Holiday Season

At upcoming holiday gatherings with family and friends (or look for any opportunity), ask about the stress facing your loved ones because they may be struggling through the pandemic and feeling depressed, educate your family and friends specifically about the dangers of **fentanyl** and ask if they use any drugs including prescription medication and alcohol to feel numb or escape reality, and tell your loved ones that help for drug/alcohol misuse or mental health concerns is available. Treatment works.

We're all in this together.

(Local resources are listed at the bottom of this newsletter.)

YOU Can Save a Life

Learn how to save a life after an overdose! Free Narcan kits are available to attendees. Must pre-register with the Howard County Health Department. To see dates and register, [click here](#).

NARCAN® Nasal Spray is not a substitute for emergency medical care. Always get help immediately, even if the person wakes up, because he/she may relapse into respiratory depression.



Thank You Parents of Middle School Students!

Thank you to all of the parents of middle school students who have already completed the 1-minute survey about our **Don't Get Benched** campaign. This campaign **features Howard County students** and was distributed to all 20 Howard County middle schools. It is based on focus group feedback from middle school students, many athletes, saying they trust their coaches.

There's still time for more middle school parents to provide feedback on how we did and what we can do in the future to better support parents and families in educating their children about prescription medication safety and misuse

prevention.

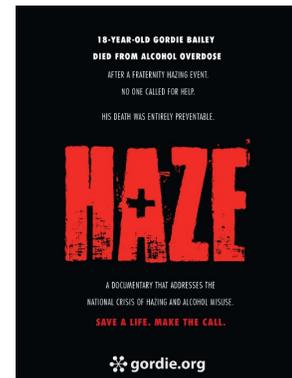
If you are the **parent or guardian of a middle school aged child**, please [click here](#) to answer a few questions (should take only a minute!) to **help us continue to provide free** resources and programs that are beneficial to families. Thank you!



Community Education Opportunity

Teen Event Available to Your Group

Thank you to the high school students, middle school students, and parents who joined HC DrugFree's Teen Advisory Council to view HAZE, a documentary about youth alcohol misuse. Because we heard such positive feedback from parents, we decided to offer a similar opportunity to Howard County PTAs/PTSAs and other community groups. If your group is interested in hosting a HAZE event, please email admin@hcdrugfree.org.



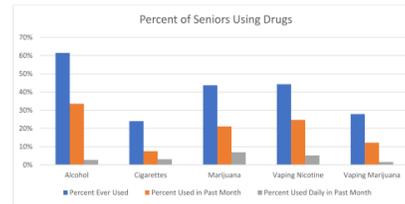
In The News

Monitoring the Future Data

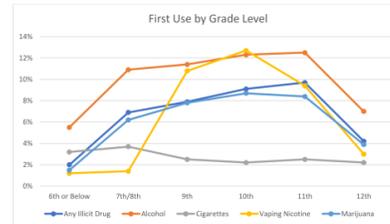
Monitoring the Future is an ongoing study examining attitudes and behaviors regarding drugs and alcohol among adolescents and adults. Every year, students in 8th, 10th and 12th grade students across the country are surveyed on topics like cigarette and vaping use, alcohol consumption, and drug use. The full results from the [2020 survey of secondary school students](#) are quite extensive, but we've included some graphs that show

the percentages of high school seniors who reported using alcohol, nicotine, and marijuana and the grade at which they reported first using alcohol, nicotine, marijuana, and any illicit drug. Click on the graphs to better view the downloadable PDF.

Percentage of high school seniors who reported ever having used these drugs, who reported having used the drug in the past month, and who reported daily use of the drug in the past month



Grade Level at which High School Students report first having used alcohol, nicotine, and drugs



Data are from Miech, R. A., Johnston, L. D., O'Malley, P. M., Bachman, J. G., Schulenberg, J. E., & Patrick, M. E. (2021). Monitoring the Future national survey results on drug use, 1975–2020: Volume I. Secondary school students. Ann Arbor: Institute for Social Research, The University of Michigan. Available at <http://monitoringthefuture.org/2020.html#monographs>

FDA Permits Marketing of "Unsafe?" E-Cigarette Products

The FDA has authorized the marketing of three new tobacco products, marking the first set of electronic nicotine delivery system (ENDS) products ever to be authorized by the FDA through the Premarket Tobacco Product Application pathway. "While today's action permits the tobacco products to be sold in the U.S., it does not mean these products are safe or 'FDA approved.' **All tobacco products are harmful and addictive and those who do not use tobacco products should not start,**" the FDA said in a [statement](#).

Underlying Medical Conditions Associated with Higher Risk for Severe COVID-19

As researchers continue to learn more about the risk factors for severe COVID-19 outcomes, the CDC continues to update the list of medical conditions are also related to more severe COVID-19 illness. Alcohol-related chronic liver diseases, mood disorders, including depression, smoking, and substance use disorders are just a few examples. To view the entire list or to learn more, visit the [CDC update](#).

Learn about Depressants

How much do you know about depressants? Just because they may be prescribed by a doctor, doesn't mean they are safe for anyone to use. In fact, misusing depressant meds can cause slurred speech, dizziness, a lack of coordination, and much more. [Play animated video and learn more.](#)

Tell Your Kids: Not Your Meds? Don't Take Them!



Please share our [Don't Get Bench](#) campaign with others working with Howard County youth...sport teams, school groups, scouts, religious groups, friends, community groups, and more!

[Download and print any of the 8 campaign ads](#) or schedule a time to pick-up posters.

This ad campaign features Howard County high school students and the idea came out of middle school focus groups. Young athletes trust their coaches and want to stay in the game!!!

Heart of the Matter Podcast with Guest Chris Herren

Elizabeth Vargas speaks with former NBA player Chris Herren on a podcast episode of Heart of the Matter.

To any outsider in his Massachusetts high school, star basketball player Chris Herren looked on top of the world, with broken records behind him and a promising career ahead of him. But what many did not know was that beneath the physical prowess was someone struggling with mental health and substance use.

In his return to Heart of the Matter, Chris connects with Elizabeth Vargas about parenting and the need to focus on our children's social and emotional health, especially against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic. The two also speak about the ripple effect of speaking up and why, as a former pro-athlete in recovery, Chris is inspired by Olympic gymnast Simone Biles's stand against mental health stigma. [Listen to the podcast here.](#)

Do You Want Our Work to Continue?



[We need YOUR financial support](#) to continue offering FREE services such as these newsletters and our medication and sharps collections.





How Can We Help?

Mental Health Crisis? Thoughts of Suicide? Problems with Drugs or Alcohol? Get Confidential Support from Maryland's HELPLINE whenever you need it 24/7/365

CALL 211, then press 1.

TEXT your zip code to TXT-211 (898-211)

VISIT 211md.org to chat or find additional resources for housing/shelter, utility assistance, food, domestic violence, legal services, and more.

Get Friends Connected to HC DrugFree

Friends keep friends informed! This newsletter and social media remain the best ways for us to share vital information with you! Please Like & Share our content on social media or forward this newsletter to a friend to help us with our mission of keeping Howard County safe and informed.

Invite a friend to [subscribe to our newsletter](#). You can also view previous newsletters in the [Newsletter Archive](#) on our website.

Help for Depression, Suicidal Thoughts or Other Mental Health Issues:

Grassroots Crisis Intervention: 410-531-6677

The Maryland Crisis Hotline: Dial 211 and then choose option 1

The Crisis Text Line: Text 741741 and a trained counselor will respond

The National Suicide Prevention Hotline: 1-800-273-8255

The Howard County Health Department: 410-313-6202

Emotional Support Human

When someone you care about is hurting, it's natural to want to help them. But, that person might not always tell you something is wrong—and you might be unsure about how to reach out. Sponsored by the Horizon Foundation. [Learn how to be an Emotional Support Human here.](#)

Gambling with Your Future

Call, text or chat 1-800-GAMBLER for free confidential, compassionate help with gambling problems.

For more information, contact

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