

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



Holiday Presence: The Gift of Togetherness

During the holiday season, it's easy to get caught up in the frenzy of shopping and anticipating the giving and receiving of gifts. In a world that often places so much weight on material possessions, it's easy to forget that the most cherished and timeless gifts are ones that cannot be wrapped. Rather than focusing solely on physical gifts, consider giving the invaluable present of presence.



Create Lasting Memories

Instead of accumulating more toys or gadgets, invest in creating memories that will last a lifetime. Plan an outing to a local event, bake cookies together, or engage in an activity like hiking or ice-skating. These shared experiences will be remembered long after the wrapping paper is discarded.

Quality Family Time

In our busy lives, finding quality time to spend together can be a challenge. Be intentional about slowing down and reconnecting with loved ones. Set aside designated family nights for activities like board games, movie marathons, or storytelling sessions. These moments will strengthen family bonds and create a

sense of warmth and unity.

Acts of Kindness

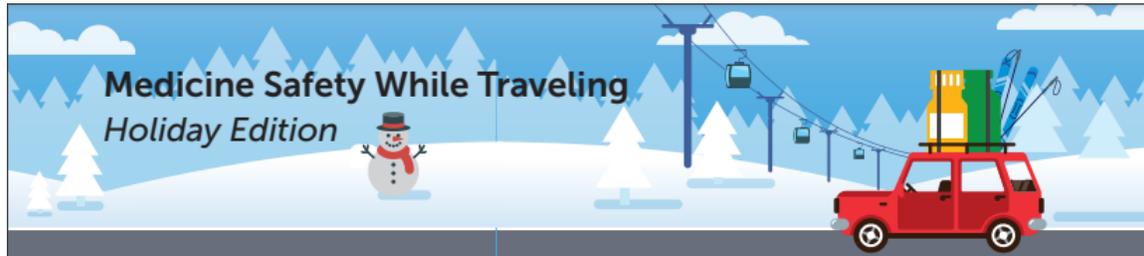
Nurture a heart for others by involving your family in acts of kindness. Volunteer together at a local charity, visit a nursing home, or come up with creative ways to help your neighbors. Instilling the values of empathy and generosity in your children will teach them the true spirit of the season.

Personalized Gifts from the Heart

If you do choose to exchange gifts, consider opting for personalized, homemade, or DIY presents. Handcrafted items or heartfelt letters expressing your love and appreciation are often more meaningful than store-bought gifts. These gestures demonstrate thoughtfulness and show that you took the time to create something special.

May this holiday season be filled with precious moments that will create lasting memories to treasure for years to come.

Travel Safely with Your Medication



During the holiday season, many families travel to spend time with loved ones or enjoy a winter getaway. Regardless of whether you are staying with family or at a hotel, when you are not at home it can be harder to follow usual safe storage practices. Here are a few tips to help keep your medicines safe and out of the hands of curious young children.

When packing...

- Pack medicines last to ensure they are not left out and within reach of young children while packing. Pack those you take daily securely in your carry-on luggage and secure those you don't need daily in your checked suitcase.
- Keep medicine in child-resistant containers.
- If packing an oral liquid medicine, bring the dosing device that came with it (e.g., dosing cup or syringe).

When traveling...

- If you are driving, keep medicine in a child-resistant container and safely secured in your bag, purse, or suitcase. Keep your suitcase in the trunk of your vehicle or in another location out of children's sight and reach.
- If you are flying, keep your medicine in a secure bag in the overhead compartment.

When you get there...

- Find a safe place, up and away and out of sight and reach of young children to keep your medicine.

- If there is a kitchen where you are staying, consider using an upper cabinet.
- If your hotel room has a safe, you can keep medicines in the safe. If there is not a safe, use the top shelf in the room closet.
- If visiting grandparents or friends, ask them ahead of time to ensure their medicines are stored out of reach and sight.

Remember...

- Keep all over-the-counter and prescription medicines up and away, out of reach and sight of young children.
- Vitamins and supplements – including those in gummy form – should also be kept up and away, out of the reach and sight of young children.
- There are many products like diaper rash creams and even eye drops that can be harmful if kids get into them. Keep these products out of reach and sight of children, just as you would other over-the-counter and prescription medicines.
- Program the Poison Help number 1-800-222-1222 into your cell phone so you have it when you need it.

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Manage Holiday Stress with Mindfulness

Not feeling particularly cheery this time of year? You're not alone. Many find that the holidays bring as much stress as they do joy. But there are ways to ease through the season. To help make the most of your festivities, Neda Gould, Ph.D., clinical psychologist and director of the Johns Hopkins Mindfulness Program at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, shares some mindful tips. [Read More](#)

Don't Gamble Away the Holiday



This season give a child a gift, not a ticket. **Avoid gifting lottery tickets to any child under 18.** Have the conversation with your family about the risks of gambling. If you, or any one you know, is struggling with problems due to gambling behavior, call: **1-800-GAMBLER (1-800-426-2537)** for assistance and resources. [Learn More](#)

YOU Can Help!



'Tis the Season for end-of-year donations! As most of you are aware, HC DrugFree is grant, contract, and donation funded. With just two changes to grants this fiscal year, our budget was reduced significantly, so your tax-deductible donation means more than ever before!

Your generosity helps us continue to offer the programs, resources, and events that help make Howard County a safer, wiser, and more connected community.

Please consider becoming a **Friend or Sponsor of HC DrugFree** by making a donation in any of the following amounts.

- \$10 student
- \$25 individual
- \$50 family
- \$50 nonprofit organizations
- \$100 business
- Sponsors starting as low as \$500.

Your support shows our funders that the community values our services.

[Donate Now](#)

Or mail your donation to HC DrugFree's office:
5305 Village Center Drive, Suite 206
Wilde Lake Village Center
Columbia, Maryland 21044

Holiday Season Driving Safety

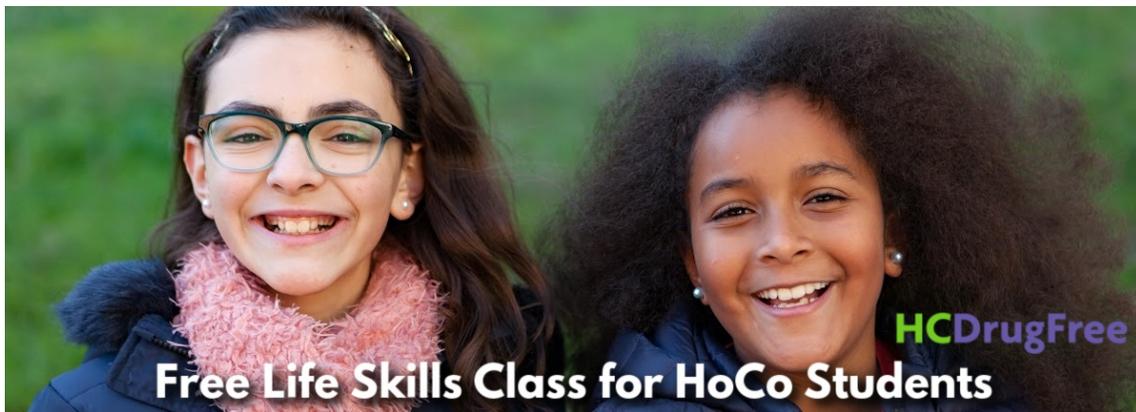


If you're celebrating and drinking this holiday season, always remember to plan ahead with a sober driver to take you home. If you're the designated driver, it's important to take the role seriously and don't consume alcohol or use other drugs. Here are some more safety tips:

- Never drink and drive.
- Don't let someone get behind the wheel if that person has been drinking.
- If you're hosting a gathering, make sure everyone has a sober ride home.
- Call 911 if you see a drunk driver.
- Always wear your seat belt. It's your best defense against impaired drivers.

[Learn More](#)

Free Life Skills Classes for HoCo Students



Registration is open for our popular online Life Skills Classes. Classes will be held on **January 16, 23, 30, February 6, 13, 20, 27, and March 5** on Zoom from **5 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.**

High school and college students will serve as role models, assist at each class, and teach the evidence-based curriculum as HC DrugFree staff oversees all classes. [Learn More](#)

Seeking College & High School Mentors for Younger Students

We are looking for responsible college and high school students raised in Howard County and available to serve as role models for our younger students as well as teach our online evidence-based Life Skills classes. Join us on Zoom from anywhere! Previous instructors were in Ohio, Delaware, College Park, Howard County, Virginia, and more. Community service hours available to high school students on our team. [Apply Here](#)

Teen Advisory Council

Next Teen Advisory Council Meeting: January 8

HC DrugFree invites **all Howard County students in grades 8-12** to attend

our monthly meetings and serve as student ambassadors in their schools and in the community.

Join our teens at the next TAC meeting on **Monday, January 8** from 5:30 to 7 p.m. on Zoom. Register early to get the meeting link. [Learn More & Register](#)

SAMHSA Fentanyl Awareness Youth Challenge



SAMHSA issued a challenge to America's youth: Help us raise awareness about fentanyl and reduce teen overdose deaths.

FentAlert: Empowering Youth for Safer Choices – SAMHSA Fentanyl Awareness Youth

Challenge is an opportunity for youth, ages 14-18, to develop a community strategy to educate their peers about fentanyl and fake pills — and prevent drug overdose deaths.

There's a total prize purse of \$80,000, with individual prizes up to \$5,000. Youth can participate individually, or as part of a team. Submissions are due by February 26. [Learn More](#)

Save the Date: HoCo Teen Listening Session

Save the Date: Teen Listening Session

Monday, February 5 • 5:30 - 7pm via Zoom

Join Howard County teens as they present "insider information" for parents, educators, middle school students, and their high school peers during this special student-lead community program. This is a unique opportunity for community members to listen to the real experiences of HoCo youth to better understand and support them. **More info coming soon!**

988 Lifeline: You Are Not Alone

Sending love to all who are:



GRIEVING A LOSS
DURING THE HOLIDAYS



FEELING LONELY



FACING FAMILY
TROUBLES



STUGGLING IN
SOME WAY



FEELING ANXIOUS



FEELING STRESSED
DURING THE HOLIDAYS



This time of year can be difficult for many. If you or someone you know is struggling to cope emotionally this holiday season, reach out. Call or text the 988 Lifeline. Trained crisis counselors are available, 24/7/365. [988lifeline.org](https://www.988lifeline.org)

[Additional Resources](#)

For more information, contact

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