

HC DrugFree

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

Dates to Remember in December

December 3: [Class 5 of 5 for Parents, Guardians & Grandparents](#)

December: National Impaired Driving Month

December: Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) Awareness Month

Give to Make a Difference in HoCo



Giving starts with YOU. Your support makes a difference every day - not just on #GivingTuesday. Whether it's today, tomorrow, or anytime, your generosity helps us provide free resources and programming to make HoCo a better and safer place to live and work. To support our mission, please visit <https://hcdrugfree.org/donate/> or mail checks to our office. Our address is at the bottom of this newsletter or on our website donation page.

GivingTuesday is a Global Day of Giving. It's an opportunity for people around the world to use their individual power of generosity to remain connected and support their causes. Join the international movement by giving locally to help Howard County families.

[Donate Online Now \(or Mail a Check\)](#)

Together, Our 1,169 Makes a Difference

The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) released the results of their 27th National Prescription Drug Take Back Day.

In total, **629,953 pounds** of unneeded medications were properly disposed of on Saturday, October 26 at collection sites across the country. At HC DrugFree's drive-thru location, **1,169 pounds** (45 bins) were collected from the Howard County community.

Since 2010, the DEA and its partners have collected nearly 19.2 million pounds of expired and unwanted prescription drugs. In partnership with the Howard County Police Department, HC DrugFree has been a collection site since 2012.

[Click here](#) to view HC DrugFree's October Drug Take Back slideshow.

DEA Issued Public Safety Alert

The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) has issued a Public Safety Alert to warn about the increase in illegal online pharmacies selling and shipping counterfeit pills made with fentanyl and methamphetamine to unsuspecting customers in the US who believe they are purchasing real pharmaceutical drugs such as oxycodone, Adderall, Xanax, and other drugs from legitimate pharmacies. [Read the DEA's public safety alert](#)

Why You're Feeling SAD This Winter

Did you know that in any given year, 5% of the US population experiences seasonal depression? Clinically known as Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), symptoms can sometimes last 40% of the year, according to psychiatry.com.

People affected by this disorder experience symptoms of depression, including sad mood, hopelessness, loss of interest in formerly pleasurable activities, changes in sleep, changes in appetite, and fatigue or low energy.

These feelings come about most commonly in winter due to the decreased sunlight's impact on our bodies and brains.

Fortunately, treatment is available. Some of the most common options include light therapy, vitamin D supplements, talk therapy, and antidepressant medication. If you think you or a loved one may be experiencing SAD, please



consult a doctor. Help is available and you deserve to enjoy the winter season.

In the case of a mental health emergency, please call or text [988](tel:988) or chat 988lifeline.org

National Impaired Driving Prevention Month

Over 10,000 deaths a year are attributed to impaired driving. That's an estimated 29 fatalities per day. The National Impaired Driving Prevention Month campaign calls the public to raise awareness and prevention efforts against driving under the influence.

In 1981, President Ronald Reagan first recognized December as National Impaired Driving Prevention Month and it has been endorsed by every President since. Rates of intoxicated driving are especially high in December due to holiday celebrations, especially New Year's Eve, so it is a good reminder for the community to take steps to plan sober drivers, share social media campaigns, and partner with local law enforcement to help keep our roads safe.

Other national organizations involved with National Impaired Driving Prevention Month are [Mothers Against Drunk Driving](#) and [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration](#).



Opioid Overdose Deaths Decreasing, but Our Work Isn't Done



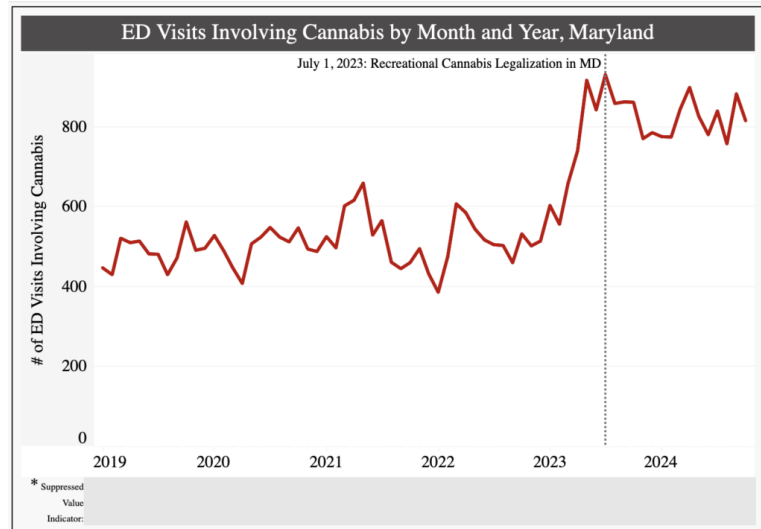
According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the number of Opioid deaths is at the lowest it has been in 4 years and greatly decreased from June 2023 (about 86,000) to June 2024 (about 70,000). These numbers are also much lower than 1990, when drug overdose deaths were peaking at 1 million per year. This decrease can be attributed to wider naloxone availability and training, lower reported rates of illicit drug use in high school students, and overall prevention initiatives from the health care industry.

However, these numbers are not guaranteed to continue dropping. Because of

the rise of the street drug, xylazine, opioids laced with this form of tranquilizer are much more potent and deadly. On the other hand, it is also speculated that fear of xylazine has kept drug users away from using as frequently and in high doses. [Read more](#)

Marijuana Legalization and Related ED Visits

Since its legalization in Maryland in July 2023, emergency department (ED) visits following recreational cannabis use have increased. These rates vary by location, with Allegany County having the highest, followed by Baltimore City.



This data comes from the Maryland Department of Health's

[Interactive Dashboard](#), which can be filtered by county and other sub-population categories and gives a variety of information beyond what is reported here, including poison control visits and general data about cannabis use in our state.

However, there is not yet data tracking what the ED visits were for, only that they occurred after cannabis use. It is speculated that many were from overconsumption symptoms of acute paranoia, or accidents from decreased coordination and sensory alterations. Continued data tracking and analyses may be able to inform future public health initiatives, as we continue to discover the health impacts of marijuana legalization. [Read more](#)

Leading a Sober-ish Lifestyle

Do you know about the health risks of regularly drinking alcohol, even in moderation?

Check out [this article](#) to learn more about how a sober-ish lifestyle can have positive effects on your life.



Teen Meeting: Monday, January 13

TEEN ADVISORY COUNCIL

Thank you to all the students who joined us for the December 2 meeting and shared their thoughts in a safe environment. What a wonderful discussion!!!

HC DrugFree's invites **all Howard County students in grades 8-12** to attend our Monday, January 13 Teen Advisory Council (TAC) Meeting from 5:30 to 7:00 p.m. on Zoom.

[Students: Register to receive the January meeting Zoom link](#)

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 and register](#)

Medication Storage

In the KNOW... Medication Storage



Store medication out of reach and out of sight



Use child safety caps



Keep a medication inventory



Utilize a medication lockbox



Speak to family and guests about medication safety

Are you IN THE KNOW about proper medication storage? [Learn more](#)

Please Remember to Donate Today

Please become a [Friend or Sponsor of HC DrugFree](#) so we can continue providing FREE programs and resources to the Howard County community. We appreciate your financial support.

[Donate Now](#)

Or mail your **donation** to HC DrugFree's office:

HC DrugFree
5305 Village Center Drive, Suite 206
Wilde Lake Village Center
Columbia, Maryland 21044

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

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](https://www.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. Press 3 for LGBTQIA+ support.

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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