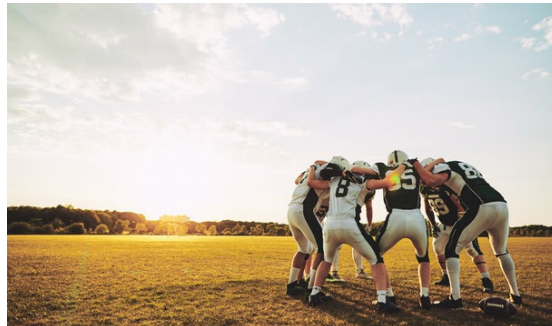


HC DrugFree

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

"A champion team will
always beat a team of
champions."

– John McGrath



Dates to Remember in February

February 7: **Wear Red Day**
February 9: **Super Bowl Sunday**
February 11: **Safer Internet Day** and **Make a Friend Day**
February 13: **Galentine's Day** (not just for gals)
February 14: **Valentine's Day**
February 17: **Random Acts of Kindness Day**
February 26: **Set a Good Example Day**

Telling the Prevention Story

HC DrugFree's Executive Director, Joan Webb Scornaienchi, once again attended SAMHSA's annual Prevention Day and the Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA) Forum at the Gaylord National Resort and Convention Center in National Harbor, MD.

Each year, SAMHSA's Prevention Day brings together over 4,000 prevention practitioners, advocates, scientists, leaders (community, state, tribal, federal), and consumers at the largest federal gathering dedicated to advancing the prevention of substance use. The event explores current, emerging, and innovative strategies, policies, programs, practices, and research. The 2025 theme, "Telling the Prevention Story," underscores sharing the successes of prevention and inspiring action.



The annual CADCA Forum is the premier training event for community leaders, coalition members, and advocates committed to the Prevention field. CADCA equips coalitions with the tools, knowledge, and support necessary to create positive change in their communities. With over 4,000 attendees from across the globe, attendees gain insights, learn best practices, and network with like-minded professionals. Featuring more than 100 workshops, plenary sessions with renowned speakers, and countless opportunities for professional development, the 2025 CADCA Forum is a chance to gain the resources needed to drive positive change. Together, we can turn knowledge into action and create lasting change.

□ Play It Safe This Super Bowl Sunday! □

Super Bowl Sunday is all about food, fun, and friendly competition, but it's also a day to be mindful of **gambling, alcohol, and medication safety**. With **68 million Americans betting over \$23 billion** on last year's game, and 325.5 million gallons of beer consumed, it's important to make responsible choices — on and off the field.

□ **Celebrate Responsibly** □

If your Super Bowl plans involve **drinking or using substances**, make a game plan to **get home safely**:

- ✓ **Designate a sober driver** before kickoff.
- ✓ **Use a rideshare service** like [Uber](#) □ or [Lyft](#).
- ✓ **Take public transportation** □ if available.
- ✓ **Stay overnight** □ if you're watching the game at a friend's house.
- ✓ **Call a friend or family member** □ if you need a safe ride.

□ **Know the Risks of Gambling**

With **mobile sports betting on the rise**, it's easy to **lose track of spending**. Set limits, avoid chasing losses, and remember—**betting should be for fun, not a financial fix**. Learn more about **problem gambling, addiction, and Maryland's gambling laws** at [HC DrugFree's Gambling Resources](#) for fact sheets and additional support.

□ **Secure Your Medications**

Hosting a Super Bowl party? **Take a time-out to secure your prescription medications**, especially opioids, to prevent misuse. Many people who misuse opioids **get them from a friend or family member's home**. **Protect your loved ones by taking these simple steps**:

- ✓ **Lock up your medications** in a secure place, out of sight and reach.
- ✓ **Do a quick inventory** before and after guests visit to ensure nothing is missing.
- ✓ **Dispose of unused or expired medications** safely at a local medication drop-off site such as HC DrugFree's drive-thru collections..
- ✓ **Never share prescription medications** even if someone says they're in pain.

Enjoy the game, stay in control, and make safety a priority. □ For more tips on keeping sports betting safe and fun, [read more](#).

Historic Decline in MD's Fatal ODs, but Challenges Remain

Governor Wes Moore announced a **historic 38% decrease in fatal overdoses** in Maryland in 2024, with **1,553 overdose deaths** reported—down from **2,511 in 2023**. This marks the **lowest overdose death rate since 2015** and reflects **statewide investments in behavioral health, expanded treatment access, and community-driven prevention efforts**. However, officials emphasize that **more work is needed to ensure all communities have equitable access to care**.

While overdose deaths declined across all demographics and age groups, disparities persist. **Non-Hispanic Black men over 55 and Hispanic youth under 25** have experienced higher overdose rates, prompting the **Maryland Overdose Response Advisory Council** to focus on addressing racial inequities. Leaders urge continued collaboration among **local health departments, community organizations, and policymakers to sustain this progress**. Marylanders struggling with substance use can **call or text 988** for support and resources. Learn more [here](#).

HCPPS: Compare Current to New Student Device Policy

Changes to HCPSS Student Technology Device Policy

[Policy 8080 - Responsible Use of Technology, Digital Tools, and Social Media](#)

Previous HCPSS Policy	New HCPSS Policy <i>As of Mar. 3, 2025</i>
<p>HCPSS permits students to bring personal technology devices to school, according to the following rules:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Elementary Schools – Students will keep personal technology devices in backpacks during the school day, unless otherwise authorized by school administrators or instructional staff.Middle Schools – Students:<ul style="list-style-type: none">Students will not use personal technology devices during non-instructional time, to include but not limited to transition between classes, lunch, recess, or in bathrooms.A school administrator may, on occasion, authorize the use of personal technology devices for special events and/or for positive behavioral supports and interventions.High Schools – Students:<ul style="list-style-type: none">May only use personal technology devices during classroom instruction when allowed by instructional staff; andMay use personal technology devices during non-instructional time (transitions between classes, lunch or special events), unless prohibited by school administrators or instructional staff.	<p>Students will keep personal technology devices away and silenced and ensure they are not a distraction during the student day.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Smart watches may be worn during the student day but may not distract instruction or be used for reasons other than checking the time.A staff member on a school-sponsored field trip may permit the use of a personal technology device by a student in limited situations where capturing a picture or video may be appropriate or contacting a parent/guardian is necessary.School administrators and school administrators' designees may authorize use of a personal device in rare instances such as an emergency for communication purposes, and when allowed as described in a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP), Section 504 Plan, or Health Plan.Personal laptops may be used for instructional activities in high school. <p>Personal Technology Device: Any non-HCPSS device that may be used to send or receive data via voice, video or text. This includes, but is not limited to, mobile phones, e-readers, tablets, personal computers, wearable technology, video recorders or other devices equipped with microphones, speakers and/or cameras.</p> <p>Student day: From the first bell of the day to the last bell of the day. (Note: this will be during posted school hours if the school does not use bells.)</p> <p>Away and silenced: Devices are not able to be seen by either the student or staff member and are set to make no noise.</p>
<h4>Consequences for Policy Violations <i>As of Mar. 3, 2025</i></h4>	
<p>Consequences for general violations of policy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">First Incident: The personal technology device is confiscated until the end of the student day. Students should turn off or lock devices prior to confiscation. A device that is confiscated during the final period of the student day will be confiscated for the entire next student day. The student may retrieve the device at the end of the day it was originally confiscated to take home but must provide it to the front office upon arrival on the next student day.Second Incident & Beyond: The personal technology device is confiscated until it is retrieved by a parent/guardian. Students should turn off or lock devices prior to confiscation.	
<p>Consequences for violations of policy by students who may use personal technology as part of an IEP/504 plan/health plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">First Incident: A phone call to the student's parent/guardian.Second Incident & Beyond: Required conference between the school administrator and parent/guardian, and level 3 responses aligned to the Student Code of Conduct at the school administrator's discretion.	

New information!

HC DrugFree already shared that the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) is making important changes to its **Responsible Use of Technology Policy (Policy 8080)** to address concerns about the impact of personal devices on student learning and well-being. Starting **March 3**, new restrictions will be in place to minimize distractions, improve focus, and support better

academic and social outcomes. These changes align with policies in other districts that have seen **higher grades, improved test scores, and better student engagement**.

To see a side-by-side comparison of the new policy vs. the existing policy, [click here](#).

The revised policy was shaped by student, staff, and parent input through surveys, testimony, and advisory workgroups. While adjusting may be challenging, Superintendent Bill Barnes believes students will benefit from fewer distractions in school. More details will be shared leading up to the March 3 implementation. Stay informed and help support a focused learning environment for all students! ☐☐

FDA Approves First Non-Opioid Pain Drug in 20 Years

The **FDA has approved suzetrigine (Journavx)**, the first new class of pain medication in two decades and the first non-opioid painkiller since the 1980s. Unlike opioids, which carry a high risk of addiction, suzetrigine targets a specific sodium channel involved in pain signaling, **offering relief without binding to opioid receptors in the brain**.

Clinical trials found that suzetrigine effectively reduced pain following surgeries like bunion removal and abdominoplasty, providing a **safer alternative to opioids** with fewer side effects. The prescription drug will be sold as a **50-milligram pill taken every 12 hours** under the brand name **Journavx** at **\$15.50 per pill**. While its role in **chronic pain management is still being studied**, experts believe this medication **could help reduce opioid dependence and reshape how acute pain is treated**.

Doctors note that suzetrigine **may not be the right option for everyone or all types of pain**, but it represents a significant step toward expanding safer pain relief options. Could this be the future of pain management? [Read more.](#)

Pain Relief for Wisdom Tooth Removal – Skip the Opioids!



February isn't just about football, hearts, and snowflakes—it's also **Dental Health Month**, and **February 9 is officially "Toothache Day"**! While no one wants to celebrate a toothache, it's the perfect time to rethink **safe pain management for dental procedures**.

When it comes to **wisdom tooth removal and other dental procedures**,

opioids **may not be the best option for pain relief**. A [major study](#) published in the *Journal of the American Dental Association (JADA)* found that a **combination of ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) and acetaminophen (Tylenol) was more effective than opioids** in managing post-surgical pain. Patients taking **non-opioid pain relievers experienced less pain, better sleep, and greater overall satisfaction**, without the risks of addiction or dangerous side effects. ☐☐

Each year, **5 million young adults** are prescribed opioids after wisdom tooth extractions, increasing their risk for **misuse and addiction**. With **opioid-related deaths reaching 81,000 per year**, reducing unnecessary prescriptions is critical. The **American Dental Association now recommends non-opioid pain relievers as the first-line treatment** for dental pain.

If your teen has a **toothache, braces discomfort, or oral surgery**, talk to their dentist about **safe pain management options**☐. **Over-the-counter medications, cold compresses, saltwater rinses, and oral pain gels** may help relieve pain **without the dangers of opioids**. Learn more [here](#). ☐

Today Is Wear Red Day

Throughout February, we observe **American Heart Month**, and today, we celebrate **Wear Red Day** to raise awareness about women's heart health.

To protect your heart and overall well-being, it's important to find creative ways to manage stress because stress affects not just your mood but also your heart health, contributing to high blood pressure, inflammation, and unhealthy habits such as overeating, **smoking, or consuming alcohol and other drugs**. Consider these simple yet effective tips to incorporate self-care into your daily life:

- **Practice mindfulness:** Start or end your day with meditation, deep breathing, or journaling to center your thoughts and reduce anxiety. Apps like Calm or Headspace can make mindfulness accessible, even during a busy schedule. ♀
- **Move your body:** Physical activity releases feel-good hormones and strengthens your heart. If the gym isn't your thing, try a brisk walk, yoga, or a dance class for a fun and engaging way to stay active.
- **Prioritize restful sleep:** Stress and sleep often go hand-in-hand. Aim for 7-9 hours of quality sleep each night by establishing a calming bedtime routine—consider a warm bath, herbal tea, or reading to unwind.
- **Unplug regularly:** Designate a “tech-free hour” each day to disconnect from screens and connect with family, friends, or nature instead. This can reduce overstimulation and help you feel more grounded.
- **Fuel your heart:** Experiment with recipes that make healthy eating feel exciting and satisfying. ♥

By committing to small but meaningful self-care habits, you can reduce stress and give your heart the love and attention it deserves. Taking care of yourself is one of the best ways to strengthen your heart and improve your overall quality of life. Read more about [Seeing RED for Heart Health](#).

Registration Open! Classes for Parents/Grandparents

Raising preteens and teens is tough. Wouldn't it be great if adults could take a class that taught us how to help our kids avoid risky behaviors, all while learning how to say NO to drugs and alcohol? There is!

Register to attend our Spring 2025 Guiding Good Choices® classes for parents, guardians and grandparents. Series will run **Tuesdays and Fridays on March 18, 21, 25, 28 and April 1 from noon to 1:30 p.m. on Zoom**. More information can be found on our [website](#) and [flyer](#).

[Register Here!](#)

Registration Open! Life Skills Classes for Middle/High Schoolers

HC DrugFree will provide another series of FUN and interactive skills-based classes designed to promote positive health and personal development. This curriculum was designed for students in grades 6 to 9, but for slightly younger or older students, we will consider each request. High schoolers also have the opportunity to volunteer to assist our instructional team of college instructors and earn Community Service Hours. The 8-class series will run across the following **Mondays: February 24, March 3, 10, 17, 24, April 7, 28 and May 5 from 5:00 to 6:30 p.m. on Zoom**.

This program will use developmentally appropriate, collaborative learning strategies so students will learn skills that have been shown to help resist high-risk behaviors including substance use (vaping, alcohol and other drugs) and more. More information can be found on our [website](#) and [flyer](#).

[Click here to register HoCo Middle School Students \(and HoCo High School Students not wanting to join our team to earn Community Service Hours\)](#)

[Click here to register HoCo High School Students wanting to join on our instructional team to earn Community Service Hours](#)

HoCo Film Fest - HC DrugFree PSA Category



Join HC DrugFree for another year of creative filmmaking fun at the HoCo Student Film Festival. The film submission deadline: **Midnight on April 1**. HC DrugFree's 2024-25 Category theme is: ***Make the Call: Help Without Hesitation***. This category was chosen to allow teens the opportunity to create public service announcements (PSAs) informing their peers and the community about **Maryland's Good Samaritan Law**. [Learn more about our PSA Category](#). Maryland's Good Samaritan Law protects individuals who seek help during a medical emergency related to drug or alcohol use. Under this law, people who call 911 to assist someone experiencing an overdose or other serious medical issue are protected from arrest, prosecution, and certain legal penalties for minor drug and alcohol offenses. [Learn more about the Good Samaritan Law](#).

Share the Love!

Love the services we provide in HoCo? Then please donate today! Your support allows us to continue to provide our resources and programs free of cost to the community. Get your donations in before the end of the 2024 tax year!

To support our mission, please visit hcdrugfree.org/donate or mail a check to: HC DrugFree, 5305 Village Center Drive, Suite 206, Columbia, MD 21044

Donate here!

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

HC DrugFree

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. 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, Fentanyl Test Strips, Xylazine Test Strips Available in Maryland:

Free training and test strips available across Maryland. [Access map](#) and [learn more](#)

[Additional Resources](#)

For more information, contact

Joan Webb Scornaienchi
Executive Director
HC DrugFree
5305 Village Center Drive, Suite 206
Wilde Lake Village Center
Columbia, MD 21044
Admin@hcdrugfree.org
www.hcdrugfree.org





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