

HC DrugFree

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

"For each petal on the shamrock,
this brings a wish your way
- good health, good luck, and happiness
for today and every day." ☐

– Irish Blessing.



We're Lucky!
Our team wears green throughout the year
as we stand together
to keep HoCo families safe and informed.

Dates to Remember in March and April

March 17: St. Patrick's Day ☐ - Plan ahead for sober fun and a safe ride home

March 17-23: National Drug & Alcohol Facts Week

March 18: Free Classes for HoCo Parents, Guardians and Grandparents

March 20: First Day of Spring ☐

March: Problem Gambling Month

April 1: HoCo Film Fest: HC DrugFree PSA Category Deadline

April 26: Medication and Sharps Drive-Thru Collection in the Wilde Lake Village Center parking lot

Stay Safe This St. Patrick's Day: Plan Ahead & Celebrate Responsibly 🍀☑

St. Patrick's Day is a time for celebration, but before heading out, it's important to remember the risks that can come with drinking, large gatherings, and peer pressure. Whether you're attending a parade, heading to a party, or just enjoying the holiday, keep these safety tips in mind.

Ways to Celebrate Without Alcohol ☐

- Attend a local parade – [Howard County's St. Patrick's Day Parade](#) takes place in historic Ellicott City on March 15.
- Get active – Join the [Shamrock 5K in downtown Baltimore](#) on March 16 at 1:00 p.m.
- Cook a traditional Irish meal – Try Irish stew, soda bread, or colcannon with friends and family.
- Enjoy Irish culture – Attend an Irish dance class, listen to traditional music, or learn about Ireland's history.
- Host a game night or movie night – A fun way to celebrate with friends.

Plan Ahead for a Fun & Safe Celebration ☐

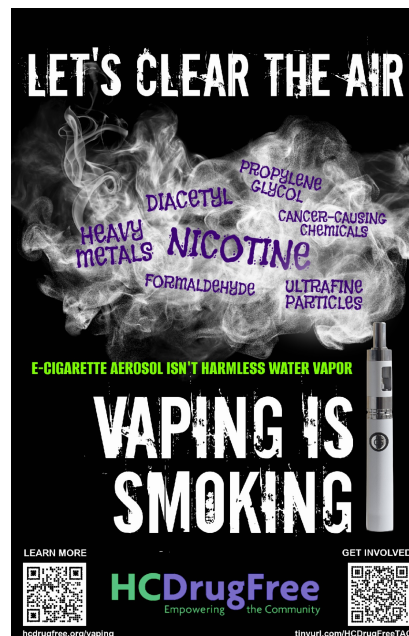
Large crowds, alcohol, and late nights can create risky situations. Make a plan in advance with your group, set expectations, and keep each other accountable. You don't need alcohol to enjoy St. Patrick's Day, embrace the traditions, and celebrate safely.



New Study: Vaping Does Not Help U.S. Tobacco Smokers Quit

A new study from the University of California San Diego challenges the widespread belief that e-cigarettes aid in smoking cessation. Researchers analyzed data from over 6,000 U.S. smokers and found that those who vaped, whether daily or occasionally, were actually less likely to quit smoking compared to those who didn't vape. Specifically, **smoking cessation rates were 4.1% lower among daily vapers and 5.3% lower among non-daily vapers** compared to smokers who did not use e-cigarettes.

The study, published in JAMA, highlights the risks of vaping and warns that **misconceptions about its effectiveness in quitting tobacco may be keeping smokers addicted to**



nicotine. While e-cigarettes do not contain the same harmful chemicals as traditional cigarettes, researchers caution that the long-term health effects of vaping remain unknown. With nearly 20% of Americans using tobacco products and e-cigarettes often marketed as a “safer” alternative, these findings have critical implications for public health policies and tobacco control efforts. [Read more.](#)

Fatal Fentanyl Overdoses are Down in Every State

For the first time in years, drug-related deaths in the U.S. are **declining at an unprecedented pace**, signaling a potential turning point in the fentanyl crisis. According to new research, **overdose fatalities have dropped by roughly 25%** nationwide, with some states seeing declines of up to **52.9%**. This sharp reduction suggests that a combination of factors, including increased access to naloxone (Narcan), changes in drug use behaviors, and a decrease in fentanyl potency, may be driving a sustained improvement.

Despite this progress, experts caution that **the crisis is far from over**. While fentanyl deaths have plummeted, dangerous substitutes like **xylazine and medetomidine** are increasingly found in street drugs, causing severe health complications. Additionally, survivors of fentanyl addiction now face urgent needs for healthcare, housing, and treatment. Could the U.S. be on track to return to pre-fentanyl overdose levels? [Read more.](#)

Cough Medicine Abuse by Teens

Many cough and cold medicines contain **dextromethorphan (DXM)**, a safe and effective cough suppressant when used as directed. However, **DXM misuse is on the rise** among teens seeking a cheap and easy high. Found in over 70 OTC medicines, DXM in large doses **can cause hallucinations, paranoia, impaired coordination, and even life-threatening effects**, especially when mixed with alcohol or other drugs.

While **DXM syrup abuse has been a concern for years**, teens today have new ways to misuse it—in **powder, capsule, or pill form, often bought online**. Websites even provide instructions on extracting DXM or determining doses to get high. Alarming, **a new trend involves mixing DXM with promethazine**, an antihistamine that increases sedation and impairs motor function, making the combination even more dangerous.

[What Parents Can Do:](#)

- Talk to your teen about the risks of OTC medicine misuse.
- Monitor the cough and cold medications in your home.
- Be aware of slang terms like "Dexies," "Triple C," and "Sizzurp."
- Keep an eye on your child's internet activity for signs of drug-related searches.

Teen substance abuse often starts with easily accessible medications. **Stay informed and start the conversation before it's too late.** [Read more](#) about the latest trends and how to protect your teen.

Starts on Tuesday! Parenting & Grandparenting Classes

HC DrugFree's **Guiding Good Choices®** is an **evidence-based program designed** to help parents, guardians, and grandparents **strengthen family bonds, navigate peer pressure, and prevent risky behaviors**. This interactive series equips you with **practical strategies** to support your child's well-being and decision-making.

What You'll Gain:

- **Proven techniques** to prevent drug use within your family
- **Strategies to set clear expectations** and promote healthy attitudes
- **Conflict resolution skills** to strengthen family relationships
- **Ways to prepare kids for peer pressure and risky situations**

□ **Class Schedule:** Tuesdays & Fridays – **March 18, 21, 25, 28 & April 1**

Time: 12:00 – 1:30 PM EST

Location: Virtual via Zoom

What Parents Are Saying:

- *"This class is incredibly relevant for all parents and should be required! The dangers of addiction are real, and open conversations at home are crucial."*
- *"This class presented by professionals, coupled with discussions at home, should be a solid deterrent for kids presented with risky behaviors in social situations."*

Don't miss this **opportunity to build stronger family connections and guide your child toward a safe and healthy future**. More information can be found on our [website](#) and [flyer](#).



[Register Here!](#)

Drive-Thru Medication & Sharps Collection



Drive-Thru Medication & Sharps Disposal Event
Saturday, April 26 • 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Wilde Lake Village Center parking lot by CA Swim Center
5305 Village Center Drive, Columbia 21044
Bring medication, vitamins, needles, syringes, EpiPens, inhalers, vapes, & more!
100 FREE Medication Lockboxes! **HCDrugFree**
hcdrugfree.org 

Saturday, April 26 • 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Please join HC DrugFree and our partners for our convenient twice-a-year drive-thru medication and sharps disposal event in the **Wilde Lake Village Center parking lot** near the Swim Center.

Bring prescription and over-the-counter medications, needles, syringes, EpiPens, vitamins, vapes, pet medications and more. Meds will be guarded and transported by the Howard County Police Department and the Drug Enforcement Administration. 100 medication storage boxes will be given away. [Learn more & volunteer.](#)

Please Donate Today!

Your support allows us to provide our resources and programs free of cost to the community. To support our work, please visit hcdrugfree.org/donate or mail a check to: HC DrugFree, 5305 Village Center Drive, Suite 206, Columbia, MD 21044

[Donate here!](#)

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.



DEA's Parent's Guide to Substance Use Prevention:

Learn more about today's drug threats and how to safeguard your child's future. *Growing Up Drug Free* is available in both [English](#) and [Spanish](#).

[Additional Resources](#)



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