

# HC DrugFree

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

“An open mind leaves a chance for someone to drop a worthwhile thought in it.”

— Mark Twain

## Dates to Remember in March and April

March: [Problem Gambling Month](#)

March 11: **National Napping Day**

March 13: Howard County Board of Education Hybrid Public Hearing on [Policy 9250 - Weapons](#) at 7 p.m. [Register to Testify](#)

March 17: **St. Patrick's Day** ☐ - Plan Ahead for Sober Fun.

March 17-23: **National Drug & Alcohol Facts Week**

March 18: [Free Classes for HoCo Parents, Guardians and Grandparents](#)

March 20: **First Day of Spring** ☐

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. Student, Adult and Medically-Trained Adult Volunteers Wanted.

## HC DrugFree's Executive Director to Serve on HoCo's New Opioid Restitution Fund Commission

Joan Webb Scornaienchi was selected by Howard County Executive Calvin Ball and confirmed by County Council to serve on the newly-established Opioid Restitution Fund Commission.

Members of this commission will review and provide recommendations about the use of settlement and grant funds related to addressing opioid use disorders.

According to County Executive Calvin Ball, "Opioid manufacturers are being held accountable for the crisis they created in our community. Now that we have been awarded millions as part of our settlement with some opioid manufacturers, we must be thoughtful in making sure that money is used efficiently and wisely to serve our community, save lives and prevent future opioid misuse."

Members will include advocates or substance use disorder professionals that provide education, treatment or prevention services; a student representative under the age of 19 at the time of their appointment; an individual or family members of an individual with an opioid use disorder; certified peer recovery specialists; and ex-officio members.

Ms. Scornaienchi, a Certified Grants Management Specialist, has served as the Executive Director of HC DrugFree for the past fifteen years. She served as the chair of the County's Local Behavioral Health Advisory Board and the County's Alcohol and Drug Abuse Advisory Board. She was a member of the County's Opioid Collaborative Community Council and continues to serve on the County's Overdose Fatality Review Team and numerous committees and advisory boards. Since 2012, Ms. Scornaienchi has spearheaded HC DrugFree's Drug Take Back Day events to remove unwanted and expired prescription medications from our community. In December, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) recognized Ms. Scornaienchi for her dedication and contributions.

[Click here](#) for information about the Commission.

## Don't Miss Out – Guiding Good Choices® Classes Start Soon!

**Parents, guardians and grandparents** can learn skills to help your HoCo kids and grandkids make healthy choices.

There's **no cost**, but the skills learned may be **priceless**.

HC DrugFree's **Guiding Good Choices®** is an evidence-based program designed to strengthen family bonds, help kids navigate peer pressure, and prevent risky behaviors. If you're a parent, guardian, or grandparent, this class is for you!

### What You'll Learn:

- Setting clear standards and healthy attitudes
- Managing conflict and strengthening family bonds
- Responding to peer pressure and risky situations
- How to prevent drug use in your family

Class Dates: **Tuesdays and Fridays on March 18, 21, 25, 28 & April 1**

Time: **Noon – 1:30 p.m.**

Where: **Zoom**

More information can be found on our [website](#) and [flyer](#).

**[What parents are saying about the classes:](#)**

- “Super helpful sessions—would recommend to parents of middle school children.”
- “I felt this class gave me a lot of ideas on how to approach different situations with my child.”
- “The dangers of addiction are real and tragic. Talking about these things is the only way children will know what is right vs. wrong.”

Don't miss this opportunity to gain valuable parenting tools—[register today!](#)



[Register Here!](#)

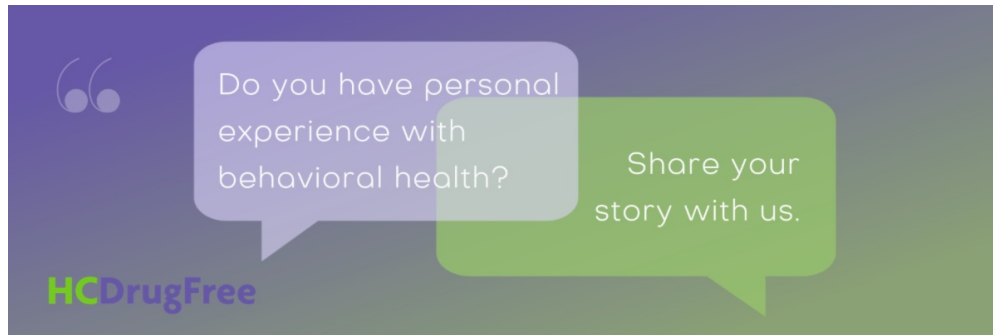
## MD's 1st Murder Conviction Tied to Deadly Overdose □

Maryland has recorded its first conviction of murder in connection with a fatal overdose after a Havre de Grace man pleaded guilty to **second-degree depraved heart murder** and **drug distribution**. The case stemmed from the October overdose death of a 33-year-old man, who unknowingly smoked crack cocaine laced with fentanyl. The defendant, after witnessing the victim’s adverse reaction, **left without seeking medical assistance**. Authorities later discovered the victim’s body, confirming **fentanyl and cocaine intoxication** as the cause of death.

The defendant was sentenced to **12 years in prison with five years of supervised probation**. Harford County prosecutors highlighted the case’s significance in setting a **precedent for holding drug dealers accountable in overdose-related deaths**. [Read more.](#)

The Howard County Police routinely respond to calls for persons with an identified developmental, intellectual, degenerative or physical disorder or disability who have wandered off or are in a state of crisis. With the 9-1-1 flagging program, police can be provided with valuable information and ways to help before they arrive. For more information, contact the Community Outreach Division at 410-313-2207 or to request a flag on your address, [click here](#).

## Share Your Story – Help Us Educate and Inspire Our Community



Have you or someone you care about been affected by youth substance use, behavioral health challenges, or rising drug trends? Your insights can help educate and support others in Howard County.

HC DrugFree invites students, parents, and community members to share their experiences on:

- **Preventing youth substance use** – What has worked for your family?
- **Mental health and behavioral challenges** – How has it impacted you or a loved one?
- **Prevention, treatment, and recovery** – What resources have helped?
- **Substance misuse dangers** – What should others know to stay safe?

Your story can help break stigma, encourage prevention, and offer hope. Some submissions may be featured in our newsletters or blog posts (all information shared will be anonymous). **Submit your story through our [online form](#) today!**

## Marijuana Ads Are Enticing Kids to Try Weed

A legal loophole is allowing teens easy access to enticing social media ads for marijuana, raising major concerns among health experts. While federal law prohibits cannabis advertising through traditional channels, businesses are **bypassing age restrictions on social media**—allowing youth to like, comment, and share posts featuring **brightly colored packaging, food-themed edibles, and young-looking salespeople**. □□

### Alarming Statistics □

- **7% of 8th graders, nearly 16% of 10th graders, and almost 26% of 12th graders** reported using cannabis in the past year.
- **Accidental ingestion of edibles by young children skyrocketed**—poison control calls surged **1,375% in four years**.

## The Risks

Research shows that early marijuana use **increases the likelihood of addiction** and can cause **lasting damage to memory, cognition, and brain development**. Experts warn that the **rise in daily cannabis use** and **accidental consumption of edibles** could have serious **long-term consequences**.

## Minimal Regulation

Despite these risks, **regulatory oversight remains minimal, allowing the cannabis industry to shape teen perceptions of marijuana** through creative marketing tactics.

How is the industry shaping teen perceptions of marijuana, and what can be done to protect youth from its influence? [Read more.](#)

## Parental Alcohol Use Linked to Cancer in Children

New research from Texas A&M shows that chronic alcohol use by parents can increase their children's risk of developing cancer, particularly in the liver. The study found that parental drinking **damages mitochondria, the power sources of cells, leading to chronic inflammation** that makes the body more vulnerable to tumor development. Children with parents who drank heavily are **more likely to develop liver cancer, especially if exposed to additional triggers** like alcohol or processed foods later in life. The risk is **even greater when both parents drink**. These findings are especially concerning for individuals with **fetal alcohol spectrum disorder**, who may require **earlier cancer screenings** and lifestyle adjustments to reduce their risk.

[Read more](#) about how parental drinking habits can shape long-term health outcomes.

## March is Problem Gambling Awareness Month

Gambling can be a fun activity, but for some, it can lead to serious financial and personal consequences. **An estimated 1% of U.S. adults struggle with severe gambling problems each year, while another 2-3% experience some level of gambling-related harm** (National Council on Problem Gambling, 2025). The annual social cost of problem gambling in the U.S. is estimated at **\$14 billion**, including job loss, bankruptcy, and gambling-related healthcare expenses.



**PROBLEM GAMBLING AWARENESS MONTH**  
→ SEEKING UNDERSTANDING

Focusing on increasing **AWARENESS** of problem gambling as a **SERIOUS** but often misunderstood **mental health condition**.

UNIVERSITY of MARYLAND SCHOOL OF MEDICINE  
The Maryland Center of Excellence on Problem Gambling

Call, Text or Chat  
**1-800-GAMBLER**  
FREE & Confidential 24/7 Helpline

### Know the Risks & Warning Signs:

- Spending more money or time on gambling than intended

- Chasing losses or borrowing money to gamble
- Lying about gambling habits
- Using gambling to escape problems or stress

### **Play Responsibly:**

- Set limits on time and money
- Treat gambling as entertainment, not income
- Never borrow money to gamble
- Take breaks and maintain balance in your activities

If you or someone you know is struggling with gambling, **help is available.**

Call **1-800-GAMBLER (1-800-426-2537)** or visit

[helpmygamblingproblem.org](https://helpmygamblingproblem.org) for free, confidential support.

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## National Sleep Awareness Week: March 9-15, 2025 □

Struggling to keep up with everything? Skipping sleep might seem like the answer, but quality rest is essential for your physical, mental, and cognitive health.

### **Why Sleep Matters:**

- ✓ **Boosts Physical Health** – Helps regulate hormones, strengthen the immune system, and lower the risk of heart disease and diabetes.
- ✓ **Supports Mental Well-Being** – Improves mood, reduces stress, and lowers the risk of anxiety, depression, and impulsivity.
- ✓ **Enhances Brain Power** – Sharpens memory, decision-making, and reaction time. Sleep deprivation can even mimic the effects of alcohol!

### **Tips for Better Sleep:**

- **Stick to a schedule** – Go to bed and wake up at the same time daily.
- **Limit screen time** – Turn off electronics at least 30 minutes before bed.
- **Stay active** – Regular exercise and outdoor sunlight exposure help regulate sleep.
- **Create a sleep-friendly space** – Keep your room dark, quiet, and cool.
- ☹️ **Watch what you consume** – Avoid caffeine and alcohol before bedtime.

Teens who consistently get 8-10 hours of sleep are better equipped to handle stress and daily challenges. Poor sleep quality can increase the risk of substance use and other health issues over time. Making sleep a priority is a simple but important step toward overall well-being.

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## Drive-Thru Medication and Sharps Collection



# Don't know what to do with your leftover meds & sharps?

## We can help.

**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, Epi-Pens, 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 storages boxes will be given away. [Learn more & volunteer.](#)

### Medication & Sharps Disposal Convenient Drive-Thru Event

**Saturday April 26 • 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.**



- Safely dispose of:**
- Prescription medication
  - Over-the-counter medication
  - Sharps (syringes, needles, EpiPens, etc.)
  - Vitamins
  - Pet medication
  - Vapes without batteries
  - Inhalers
  - And more!

**HCDrugFree** Wilde Lake Village Center Parking Lot  
5305 Village Center Drive, Columbia 21044



**Teens: Earn Community Service Hours**  
Seeking student, adult, and medically-trained adults volunteers. Community service hours available for students. Spend some time making a difference in Howard County!

**Medication Lockbox Giveaway!**  
We are giving away 100 Medication Lockboxes! First come, first served. Limit 1 per vehicle.



[HCDrugFree.org](http://HCDrugFree.org)

Provided by HC DrugFree, in partnership with the DEA, MD's Office of Overdose Response, Howard County Police and Health Dept., Local Behavioral Health Advisory Board, and HCPSS.

## Naloxone Saves Lives in HoCo

In the **KNOW...**  
**Naloxone**  
 Reverse an overdose. Save a life.



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.](#)

**Donate**



**HC DrugFree**  
*needs your support!*  
*Help us help Howard County*

[www.hcdrugfree.org/donate/](http://www.hcdrugfree.org/donate/)



Donate today! Your support allows us to continue to provide our resources and programs free of cost to the community. To support our mission, please visit [hcdrugfree.org/donate](http://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](http://988.maryland.gov). 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.



### [Additional Resources](#)





## Are you on social media?

Follow, like, and share our information to help spread resources to our Howard County community!



## Are you following us on social media?



-  @hc\_drugfree
-  HC DrugFree
-  HC DrugFree
-  @HCdrugfree

For more information, contact

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