

# HC DrugFree

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

"You cannot swim for new horizons until you have courage to lose sight of the shore."

— William Faulkner

## Dates to Remember in July

July 1-31: [National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month](#)

July 1-31: [UV Safety Month](#)

July 1-31 [Make A Difference to Children Month](#)

## LAST CALL: Begins on Monday

### **FREE - LIFE SKILLS REGISTRATION NOW OPEN**

College student instructors are hired! High school students are excited to meet the younger students! Adult educator(s) will oversee each class. There's still time to join our instructional team or register your child to participate in FREE online classes.

HC DrugFree's FREE online Life Skills Classes begin on Monday, and we need your help reaching two important groups:

- ☐ **Students entering grades 6–9** (some slightly younger and older) can participate in fun, interactive sessions to build confidence, manage stress, resist peer pressure, and prepare for high school and beyond.
- ☐ **High school students** can volunteer as peer mentors to earn service hours, boost leadership skills, and gain real-world experience that looks great on college and job applications!

Other ages may be considered. Apply now!

Classes run **July 21–24** and **July 28–31 (Monday -Thursday for 2 weeks)**

**10:00–11:30 AM on Zoom.**

- ☐ It's free, safe, and packed with real-life skills.

□ [Learn more](#) about the classes and [register](#)



## HoCo Kids: FREE Life Skills Classes

HC DrugFree is providing another series of FUN and interactive skills-based classes designed to promote positive health and personal development for students in grades 6 to 9 (or slightly younger or older). The curriculum is designed to strengthen student abilities in the following areas:

- Self-Image & Self-Improvement
- Social Skills
- Resolving Conflicts
- Coping with Uncomfortable Feelings
- Personal Self-Management Skills
- Evaluating Advertising & Entertainment
- Drug Resistance Skills
- And MUCH MORE!!!

**Meeting via Zoom on the following days:**

**July 21, 22, 23, 24, 28, 29, 30, 31**  
**10:00 - 11:30 a.m.**

**Learn more: [HCDrugFree.org/currentevents](https://www.HCDrugFree.org/currentevents)**



**HCDrugFree**  
Empowering the Community

443-325-0040

[LifeSkills@hcdrugfree.org](mailto:LifeSkills@hcdrugfree.org)

[www.HCDrugFree.org](https://www.HCDrugFree.org)

Funding provided by the Howard County Health Department, MDH, and SAMHSA

## !!JUST IN!!

A Howard County college student shares powerful insights!

[Read here](#)



## Hiring! New Leadership Position!

New position!! Accepting applications.

HC DrugFree is looking for a self-motivated Howard County professional to **take the lead on many day-to-day management duties** as well as **lead educational projects/programs**. Success in this position may lead to career growth and advancement opportunities.

All candidates must pass a background check and possess strong organizational skills, writing skills, and computer skills. **A flexible schedule is a must.** Transportation required.

Do you have the experience, skills, and energy to help lead HC DrugFree - or know someone who does? If so, [apply here!](#)

Be sure to tell us why you are the best person for this position, and if you have questions, please put them in the application system. Sorry, no phone calls or emails.

## Ride Safe, Ride Sober

While the summer breeze might be tempting, remember that alcohol and driving is a deadly combination.

The road's meant for fun, not recklessness. Keep it safe and sober this summer—your ride, your responsibility! □



## More Than A Furry Friend: Therapy Dogs & Mental Health

Petting a dog might seem simple, but science says it can significantly reduce stress, anxiety, and symptoms of depression, especially in young adults facing new challenges. Two recent studies found that therapy animal programs helped college students and adults alike better manage their mental health,

with touch and connection playing a key role.

At HC DrugFree, we know prevention starts with emotional wellness. Whether it's through Life Skills classes or community support, we're committed to helping youth build healthy habits for both body and mind.

Read more about the research [here](#).

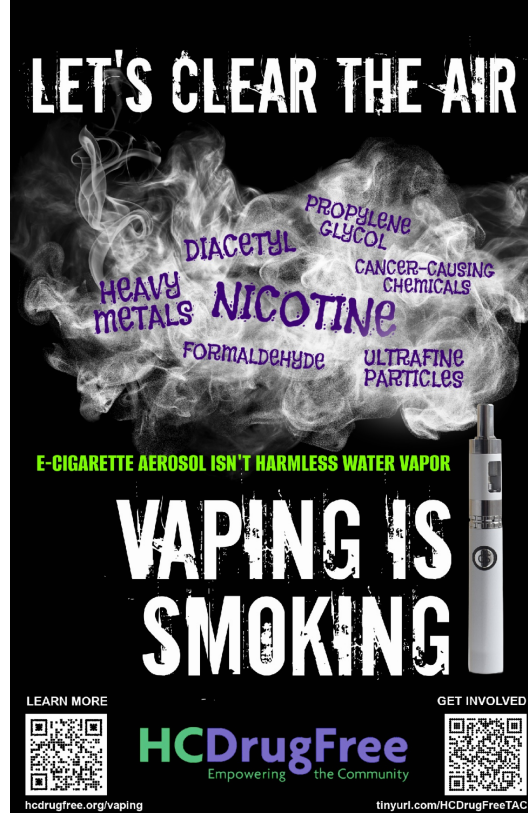


## Vaping's Hidden Cost: The Environmental Impact

We often hear about the health risks of vaping, but there's another reason to quit: the environmental damage. Disposable e-cigarettes, now the most commonly used type, are piling up in landfills, leaking toxic chemicals, and even causing fires due to built-in lithium batteries.

With few recycling options and little regulation, most vapes end up as e-waste. It's a growing crisis, driven by illegal products and marketing that targets young people. At HC DrugFree, we believe prevention includes protecting both our health and our planet. Let's help youth make informed choices; for themselves and the environment. **We accept vapes** without batteries at our twice-a-year drive-thru collections.

Read more from the [Truth Initiative](#).



## One Deadly Huff: The Risk of "Dusting"

A dangerous social media trend known as "dusting" is putting teens' lives at risk. This form of "huffing" involves inhaling compressed air or gas from products like computer dusters to get a quick high. These substances are extremely toxic — even one use can cause sudden death, permanent brain damage, or heart failure.

Compressed air products may seem harmless, but they contain chemicals, such as difluoroethane, that deprive the brain of oxygen and can shut down vital organs in seconds. The high is brief — but the consequences can be permanent. These products are easy to access at home or in stores, making them especially risky for curious teens.

Sudden Sniffing Death Syndrome is a fatal consequence of inhaling chemicals, even just once. It can cause the heart to stop beating within minutes of use, especially if the person is startled or physically active after huffing. SSDS doesn't require repeated use — it can happen the very first time a teen tries an inhalant.

Many teens are unaware of how deadly huffing can be. Parents and caregivers: Talk to your teen about the dangers of inhalant use, monitor what they're exposed to online, and keep household products stored safely. A simple conversation could save a life.





## Bipolar Disorder & Summer: Know the Risks, Protect Your Health

While sunny days lift many spirits, for some people living with bipolar disorder, summer can bring unique challenges. Research shows that manic symptoms often increase in the spring and summer due to disruptions in sleep, increased daylight, and changes in routine.

Staying on track with consistent sleep, daily habits, and mood monitoring can help prevent episodes before they escalate. If you or someone you know lives with bipolar disorder, early action and support make all the difference. HCDrugFree encourages individuals and families to learn the signs and seek help early—mental health is a year-round priority.

Read more [here](#).

## Medicaid & Overdose Treatment: Why It Matters

A recent [NPR report](#) highlights that Medicaid coverage plays a lifesaving role in treating opioid addiction by providing access to medications like methadone and buprenorphine. These treatments lower overdose death rates by nearly 50%, yet only 1 in 5 people who need them actually receive them .

What's concerning right now is that policymakers are discussing changes to Medicaid funding that could reduce access for vulnerable individuals, including teens and adults in recovery. Any interruption in coverage, even if just a short break, can put people at serious risk.

### What You Can Do:

- Stay informed about changes to Medicaid policy that affect treatment options.
- Share reliable resources on addiction treatment with those who need it.
- Advocate for uninterrupted coverage to support continuous care and recovery.

Read more about Maryland's response [here](#).



## Summer Reading Lists Released

The time is here! The Howard County Library System has released their [Summer Reading List](#) for children, all the way up to adults!

HC DrugFree values the importance of literacy and education in our community, here are our picks from the list, specifically related to our mission to advance wellness in Howard County:

### Children:

- 1.) *A Split Second* by Janae Marks
- 2.) *Lola* by Karla Valenti
- 3.) *The Truth About 5th Grade* by Kim Tomsic

### Teens:

- 1.) *The Glass Girl* by Kathleen Glasgow
- 2.) *Break To You* by Neal Shusterman
- 3.) *All the Fighting Parts* by Hannah Saywerr

### Adults:

- 1.) *From Here to the Great Unknown: A Memoir* by Lisa Marie Presley
- 2.) *Oh No, Not "The Home": Observations and Confessions of a Grandmother in Transition* by Peggy Rowe
- 3.) *A Little Less Broken: How an Autism Diagnosis Finally Made Me Whole* by Marian Schembari



# TEEN ADVISORY COUNCIL

HC DrugFree invites **all Howard County students in grades 8-12** to join our Teen Advisory Council (TAC) Meeting.

**Students:** If you have not submitted a new 2025-26 registration, please complete [this form](#) to register for the coming school year. **Even if you have been a member for several years, we need a new registration each school year.**

Members of TAC attend our monthly meetings and serve as student ambassadors in their schools and in the community.

## 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 about TAC](#)

## Safe Storage of Meds



Safe medication storage isn't just about having a lock: it's about putting one more barrier between your loved ones and potential harm.

Try using a coded lockbox, a locking tackle box, a locked filing cabinet, or even a locked toolbox, all items you may already have at home!

When in doubt, dispose of unused medications properly. It's one of the simplest ways to protect children, teens, elderly, and even pets.

- ☐ Safe storage = prevention
- ☐ One small step can make a big difference
- ☐ Learn more about safe disposal [here](#).

[Learn to keep your loved ones safe!](#)

Pressured to “Glow Up” This Summer



Summer break is often portrayed as a time to transform your appearance, but for many teens, this “glow-up” culture can lead to anxiety, loneliness, and low self-esteem. With social media fueling unrealistic expectations, it’s easy to fall into a cycle of comparison and self-criticism. Our recent [blog post](#) offers practical tips for teens to build confidence, protect their mental health, and enjoy summer without the pressure to be “perfect.”



## Stay In the Loop: Follow Us Online!

Want real-time updates and powerful stories from our community?

Follow HC DrugFree on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn to stay informed about important events, helpful resources, and prevention news as it happens.

From last-minute event info to tips that keep your family safe, our social media is your fastest way to stay connected. Join the conversation: be informed, inspired, and part of the movement!

### One-Click Links!

Facebook: [HC DrugFree](#)

Instagram: [@hc\\_drugfree](#)

LinkedIn: [HC DrugFree](#)

Twitter: [@HCdrugfree](#)

## In the *KNOW* about Xylazine & Medetomidine



The DEA’s newly released [2025 National Drug Threat Assessment](#) highlights a troubling trend: veterinary medications are increasingly being misused in the illicit drug supply.

Xylazine, a powerful animal tranquilizer, continues to be the most common

adulterant found in fentanyl powder. Even more concerning, a newer veterinary sedative—medetomidine—is now appearing in street fentanyl as well.

These substances are not approved for human use and can dangerously worsen the already deadly effects of opioids. Xylazine, for example, does not respond to naloxone (Narcan), making overdoses even harder to reverse. With medetomidine being even stronger, health officials fear a rise in unintentional overdoses and drug-related deaths.

This development is a critical reminder of how unpredictable and dangerous illicit drug use has become. Parents and communities should stay informed and continue emphasizing prevention.

## Donate Today!



Your support allows us to provide our FREE resources and programs to the community. Please donate today by visiting [hcdrugfree.org/donate](https://hcdrugfree.org/donate/) or mailing a check to: HC DrugFree, 5305 Village Center Drive, Suite 206, Columbia, MD 21044

**Donate here!**

## Resources

### **NAMI Howard County - Mental Health Services:**

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Howard County is dedicated to improving the lives of individuals affected by mental health conditions and their loved ones. [Download brochure.](#)

### **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://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.



## 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](#)



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## [Additional Resources](#)

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For more information, contact

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