

HC DrugFree

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

“Volunteers are love in motion!”

—Author unknown

Dates to Remember in October

October - [National Substance Use and Misuse Prevention Month](#)
October 25 - [Drive-thru Medication Collection in Wilde Lake Village Center parking lot](#)

Wanted: Volunteers of All Ages

Students and adults of all ages are needed. We have jobs for everyone: **young or young-at-heart** and those wanting to stand or sit (please feel free to **bring a chair**). Serve our community with your family/friends or come make new friends.

On Saturday, October 25, we are hosting another drive-thru Medication disposal event. We need **75-100 student and adult volunteers**. In addition, we need **medically-trained adults** (pharmacists, EMTs, nurses, doctors, etc.) to handle the medication.

As always, we depend on the community to make this event a success as we remove unwanted and expired medications from homes across the HoCo community and work side-by-side to keep our youth and families safe.

Reminder: Student volunteers are eligible to receive Community Service Hours if all forms are completed and signed at the event. We encourage adults to accompany students.

[Learn more & volunteer](#)

Wanted: Photographers/Videographers

If you want to be on our photography/videography team for our October 25 event, feel free to volunteer your photography/videography talents.

Sign up [here](#) to volunteer (add any questions/comments to the registration form and we will get back to you).

Medication Collection on Saturday, October 25

On October 25, 2025, communities across Maryland will join the DEA's National Prescription Drug Take Back Day to dispose of unused or expired medications safely.

Safe disposal not only prevents misuse but also **supports suicide prevention by reducing access to lethal means**. This effort is part of our commitment to integrated wellness, bringing together substance use prevention, recovery, and mental health.

HC DrugFree's next drive-thru medication collection will be held on Saturday, October 25 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the Wilde Lake Village Center parking lot in Columbia. The Howard County Police will guard and transport all medications. Howard County students can earn Community Service Hours if they properly register.

Pills may remain in bottles. No need to remove labels. Safely dispose of:

- Prescription Medication
- Over-the-counter meds
- Vitamins
- Vape Devices with batteries removed
- Inhalers
- Pet Medication
- and more...

Update: We will not collect sharps. **To dispose of sharps:**

The Howard County Bureau of Environmental Services recommends that you place used (or unused) needles in an empty plastic bottle (e.g., laundry detergent bottle) to protect the trash collection crew. When the bottle is full, add the cap and put the bottle in your curbside trash.

100 FREE medication storage boxes will be given away at this event. We will not have the boxes ahead of time and they will go fast, so if you want one, you must get it at the event.

[Learn more](#)

Medication Disposal

Convenient Drive-Thru Event

Saturday October 25 • 10 a.m.-2 p.m.



Safely dispose of:

- Prescription medication
- Over-the-counter medication
- Vitamins
- Pet medication
- Vapes without batteries
- Inhalers
- And more!

Not Accepting Sharps:

Needles, Syringes and EpiPens

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

Provided by HC DrugFree, in partnership with the DEA, MD's Office of Overdose Response, Howard County Police and Health Department, HCPSS, MDH, and SAMHSA.

[Download and Print Flier](#)

FREE Classes for Parent/Grandparents

HC DrugFree's FREE classes for Howard County parents, guardians, and grandparents are back!

The Fall 2025 series will run (Tuesdays and Thursdays): November 11, 13, 18, 20 and December 2 from noon to 1:30 p.m. on Zoom.

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? There is.

Guiding Good Choices® is an evidence-based, interactive prevention program that helps you build a stronger bond with your child, while also providing skills proven to reduce the risk of children engaging in substance use or other risky behaviors.

Learn how to:

- Strengthen Family Bonds
- Develop Healthy Beliefs and Clear Standards
- Avoid Trouble and Respond to Peer Pressure
- Manage Conflict and Express Feelings Constructively

- Prevent Drug Use in Your Family
- And More!

[Learn more](#) and [register](#)



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- Manage Conflict and Express Feelings Constructively
- Strengthen Family Bonds
- And More!

This series of five Zoom classes is for **parents, guardians, and grandparents** of 9-14 year olds, but will consider slightly older or younger children on a case by case basis. Adult **or** child must be a Howard County resident.

**Class Dates: Tuesdays/Thursdays:
November 11, 13, 18, 20 and December 2**

(Participants are encouraged to attend all 5 sessions.)

Time: Noon - 1:30 p.m.

Register: <https://tinyurl.com/GGC-Fall2025>

Learn more: hcdrugfree.org/currentevents

HCDrugFree
Empowering the Community



[Download and print flyer.](#)

FDA Urges Child-Resistant Packaging for Nicotine Pouches After Spike in Accidental Exposures

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration is calling on manufacturers of nicotine pouches to adopt child-resistant packaging, following a concerning rise in accidental poisonings among young children.

What the FDA Found

- Between April 1, 2022 and March 31, 2025, reports of nicotine pouch exposure to U.S. Poison Centers steadily increased.
- About 72% of these exposure cases involved children under 5 years old.
- Young children can suffer serious harm, even from small amounts. Toxic effects have been reported with doses as low as 1 to 4 milligrams of nicotine. Symptoms may include confusion, vomiting, and loss of consciousness.

What FDA Is Recommending

- Manufacturers should consider using child-resistant packaging so that nicotine pouches are harder for young children to open.
- Parents and caregivers should safely store all nicotine products in secure locations: keep them in the original packaging, out of sight and reach of children and pets.

- If ingestion happens, call Poison Control immediately at 1-800-222-1222.

Why This Matters

Many nicotine pouch products have bright colors, fruity flavors, or packaging that could appeal to children, making them especially risky. With reports of accidental exposure climbing, taking steps like improved packaging and safe storage has become more urgent than ever.

[Read report](#)

Hiring!

Like our work? Come join our team! 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 lead HC DrugFree - or know someone who does? If so, [apply here!](#)

If you have questions, please put them on your application. No phone calls or emails.

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month

[This month](#), we're reminded that prevention starts with awareness, including how alcohol and drug use can increase cancer risk.

Even moderate drinking raises estrogen levels, which can promote breast cancer growth. The CDC classifies alcohol as a known carcinogen, and combining it with tobacco or drug use increases the danger.

Studies also show that women with substance use disorders face higher risks of developing or dying from breast cancer.

Protect yourself and your loved ones:

- Limit alcohol use
- Avoid mixing alcohol and tobacco
- Stay current with screenings and mammograms
- Talk openly about substance use and prevention
- Keep medications locked away and secured to prevent misuse

Learn more:

□ [CDC – Alcohol & Cancer](#)



What Marijuana Really Does to the Developing Brain

Psychiatrist Dr. Daniel Amen warns that marijuana use, especially among teens, can reduce blood flow to the brain, harming memory, attention, and decision-making. Youth use is linked to higher risks of anxiety, depression, psychosis, suicidal behaviors, and even cardiovascular problems. The developing brain is especially vulnerable, so delaying first use and keeping substances safely stored is critical for protecting long-term health.

Read More [Read more.](#)



How to Support Someone Quitting Vaping

Quitting vaping can be challenging, but your support can make a significant difference. Here are some ways to help:

- Stay patient and positive: Understand that withdrawal symptoms like irritability and anxiety are common. Your encouragement can help them stay motivated.
- Celebrate milestones: Recognize and celebrate each step they take towards quitting. Positive reinforcement can boost their confidence.
- Be there emotionally: Offer a listening ear and be empathetic to their struggles. Knowing they have someone to talk to can ease the process.

Remember, your support can be a crucial part of their journey to a vape-free life. Bring unwanted vapes to HC DrugFree's drive-thru collection on Saturday, October 25!! Be sure to remove the batteries.

[Learn more](#)



Teen Advisory Council Meeting



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

There will be no October TAC meeting, instead, members will attend the Saturday, October 25 Medication Take Back event.

To RSVP/register to receive the **Monday, November 3 Zoom meeting link**, [click here](#). Meetings will run from 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. Each meeting has a unique link, so members must RSVP/register before each 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](#)

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](#)

Donate Today!



Your support allows us to provide our FREE resources and programs to the community. Please donate today by visiting hcdrugfree.org/donate or mailing 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](#)

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. Maryland veterans and their loved ones can call 988 and press 1 to transfer to the Veterans Crisis Line. Press 2 for Spanish.



[Additional Resources](#)

For more information, contact

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