

HC DrugFree

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



Dates to Remember

December 1-31 - [National Safe Toys and Gifts Month](#)
December 1-31 - [National Impaired Driving Prevention Month](#)
December 1-31 - [International Sharps Injury Prevention Month](#)
January 12 - [Teen Advisory Council Meeting](#)
April 7, 2026 - [HoCo Student Film Festival/HC DrugFree Category Submission Deadline](#)
May 1, 2026 - [HoCo Film Festival at Miller Library](#)



December is National Impaired Driving Prevention Month!



The holidays bring people together—and everyone deserves to get home safely. 💙

During National Impaired Driving Prevention Month, we encourage families to talk about safe driving and plan ahead before celebrations begin. Safe choices behind the wheel save lives.

Unboxing Gifts, Sharing Smiles & Making Memories Together 🎁



As loved ones gather in your home this season, and as we recognize [International Sharps Injury Prevention Month](#), it's also a perfect time to pause and think about safety. **Medications, both prescription and over-the-counter, should always be stored securely and out of reach.** This includes sharps (needles, syringes, EpiPens, etc.).

Using a medication lockbox adds an extra layer of protection, especially in busy households with kids, teens, and guests coming and going.

If you did not receive a [storage box from us](#), we encourage you to use your own secure location, such as a locked cabinet, drawer, or safe, to store medications safely in your home.

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.*

A few simple steps can help keep the focus on joy, not accidents. Prevention starts at home.



Looking for Student Videos

HoCo Student Film Festival – Enter Now!

HC DrugFree is proud to sponsor a category in the 2025-26 HoCo Student Film Festival. Students are invited to create a PSA for this year's theme:

"In The Know: Fake Pills, Real Danger"

Inspired by the DEA's "One Pill Can Kill" campaign, this category focuses on the risks of counterfeit pills, especially those laced with fentanyl.

Key Details

- Submission Deadline: April 7, 2026
- Festival Date: May 1, 2026, 7–8:30 PM at Miller Library
- Length: 30 seconds–2 minutes (plus a 10–30 second closing screen)
- Must Include: HC DrugFree logo, website (hcdrugfree.org),
Admin@hcdrugfree.org

For requirements and past winners, visit our [website](#) and the [Film Fest website](#).



Meth + Fentanyl: A Deadly Combination on the Rise

Methamphetamine use is tightly linked to the fentanyl crisis nationwide. This dangerous pairing, often called synthetic speedballing, combines a stimulant (meth) with a powerful opioid (fentanyl), sharply increasing overdose risk.

Recent data shows:

- Nearly 1 in 3 overdose deaths since 2021 involved meth
- Almost 75% of meth-related deaths also involved opioids
- In 2023, about 60% of fatal fentanyl overdoses involved stimulants

Unlike earlier heroin and cocaine trends, today's drug market is dominated by synthetic drugs. Meth and fentanyl are cheap, highly potent, and often mixed, sometimes without the user's knowledge. Even people who believe they're using only meth may be exposed to fentanyl, which is why experts recommend using naloxone whenever an overdose is suspected.

There is no FDA-approved medication for meth overdose or meth use disorder. Treatment relies on emergency care, evidence-based therapies like Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and Contingency Management, and long-term recovery support.

To learn more, visit [here](#).

National Safe Toys & Gifts Month

As we recognize Safe Toys & Gifts Month, families are encouraged to think not only about age-appropriate gifts, but also about the messages we share with kids and teens. Open conversations about alcohol and drug misuse can help

young people navigate social pressures and make safer choices during the holidays and beyond.

Also, health experts and lottery commissions nationwide issue annual warnings that **giving lottery tickets to youth significantly increases their risk of developing problem gambling later in life**. Research indicates that children exposed to gambling are four times more likely to become problem gamblers as adults.



988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

The holidays can be joyful, but they can also feel isolating for many people. If you or someone you love is feeling lonely, overwhelmed, or in crisis this season, you're not alone. Help is available 24/7.

Marylanders experiencing a mental health or substance use crisis can call or text 988 to connect with trained counselors. Veterans and their loved ones can call 988 and press 1 to reach the Veterans Crisis Line.

Press 2 for Spanish. Wait times vary. More information can be found on 988's [What to Expect](#) and [FAQ pages](#).

Learn more at [988 maryland.gov](https://988.maryland.gov) and access free community outreach materials in our [988 Toolkit](#).

The holidays can be tough.

■ Call, text, or chat **988**
for support anytime.

988 | SUICIDE & CRISIS
LIFELINE

Hiring in the New Year!

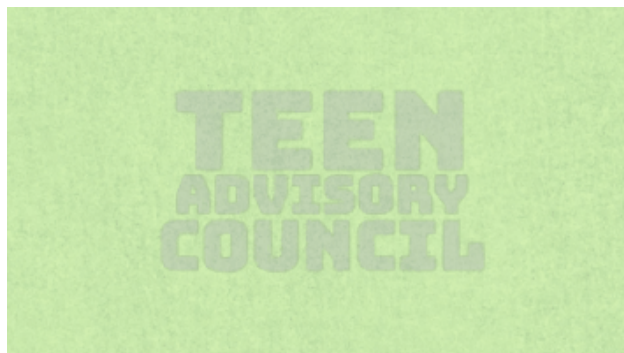
Start the new year with us! Accepting applications.

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.

Teen Advisory Council Meeting



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

To RSVP/register to receive the **Monday, January 12 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. Save the date for the Monday, February 9 meeting.

Students: If you have not submitted a new 2025-26 registration, please complete [this form](#).

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](#)

Your Support Matters:

Make Your Year-End Tax Donation 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](#)

Resources

Gambling Addiction:

Contact 1-800-GAMBLER (1-800-426-2537) for free, confidential support 24/7 or visit helpmygamblingproblem.org

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](#)

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](#)



[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



HC DrugFree | Wilde Lake Village Center 5305 Village Center Drive, Suite 206 | Columbia, MD 21044 US

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)



Try email marketing for free today!