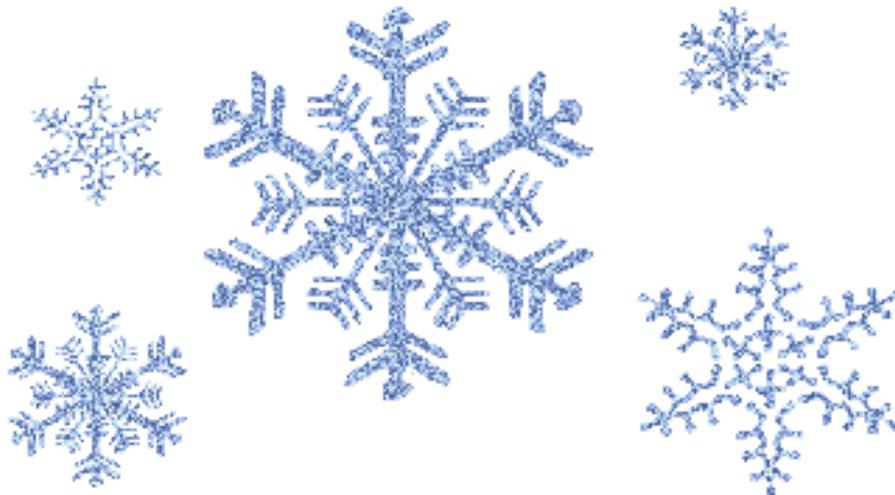


HC DrugFree

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

"Snowflakes are one of nature's most fragile things,
but just look what they can do when they stick together."

-Vesta M. Kelly



Dates to Remember

January 1-31 - [National Substance Use Disorder \(SUD\) Treatment Month](#)

January 1-31 - [National Stalking Awareness Month](#)

January 23 - [Maternal Health Awareness Day](#)

February 25 - [Free Life Skills Classes](#) first day of series (see update below)

April 7, 2026 - [HoCo Student Film Festival/HC DrugFree Category Submission Deadline](#)

May 1, 2026 - [HoCo Film Festival at Miller Library](#)

High Schoolers: Assist Our Instructional Team



HoCo Teens: Join Our Instructional Team

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. **High school participants (grades 9-12) earn Community Service Hours** by assisting our college instructors throughout the course. You can act as a mentor and role model, while continuing to practice your own personal development skills. **Register now** using the link below!

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 Wednesdays 5:15 p.m. - 6:45 p.m. on:
February 25; March 4, 11, 18, 25; April 8, 22, 29

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

HCDrugFree
Empowering the Community

443-325-0040
LifeSkills@hcdrugfree.org
www.HCDrugFree.org

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

We have an exciting opportunity for Howard County high school students!!

Join our "Spring 2026 Instructional Team" to assist the HoCo-raised College Student Instructors logging in from the University of Maryland.

Earn Community Service Hours for your time as well as mentor younger students and **add this leadership opportunity to your resumes/college applications.**

[Register here.](#)

[Learn more.](#)

Our team will be encouraged to join at 4:45 p.m. (30 minutes before class starts) to get briefed on that day's class topics and provide feedback on a special project. Team members **MUST** remain on camera! Positive role models need to be seen and fully engaged!

Don't want to be on the Instructional Team? No worries. Of course, high school students not interested in serving on our team are very welcome to attend the classes to gain the knowledge. See update below.

Life Skills Classes Now Open for Registration!



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!!!

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

The 8-class series will run across the following Wednesdays:

February 25, March 4, 11, 18, 25, April 8, 22, 29th from 5:15 to 6:45 p.m. on Zoom.

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

FREE for HoCo Kids and Teens

HC DrugFree will provide another series of FUN and interactive skills-based classes designed to promote positive health and personal development. This curriculum was designed for **students in grades 6 to 9**, but for slightly younger or older students, we will consider each request. **High schoolers** also have the opportunity to volunteer to assist our instructional team of college instructors and earn community service hours. See update above.

This program will use developmentally appropriate, collaborative learning strategies so students will learn skills that have been shown to help resist high-risk behaviors including substance use (vaping, alcohol and other drugs) and more. [Learn more.](#)

January is Stalking Awareness Month

January is [National Stalking Awareness Month](#), a time to raise awareness about a serious and often misunderstood form of abuse. Stalking is a pattern of repeated, unwanted behaviors that can cause fear, emotional distress, and safety concerns.

Stalking is more common than many realize:

- 1 in 3 women and 1 in 6 men experience stalking in their lifetime
- About 13.5 million people are stalked each year in the U.S.
- 84% of victims report feeling fearful or concerned for their safety

Stalking can include unwanted phone calls or messages, showing up uninvited, being followed or watched, or sending unwanted gifts. Most stalkers are someone the victim knows, such as an acquaintance or current or former partner.

Awareness matters. Recognizing the signs of stalking and taking concerns seriously can help prevent escalation and connect victims to support sooner.

If you or someone you know needs help:

- National Stalking Resource Center (SPARC): stalkingawareness.org
- National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)
- In emergencies, call 911

At HC DrugFree, we are committed to education, prevention, and community safety. Join us this January in recognizing National Stalking Awareness Month and supporting those impacted.



Dial 211

In times of loss or challenge, support is available. 211 Maryland connects individuals and families to local resources, including grief counseling, housing assistance, food support, and financial help. Trained specialists are available 24/7 to listen and connect you to services in your community—just call or text 211.

[Learn more or find help online.](#)



Dial 988

Marylanders who are experiencing a mental health or substance use crisis should call or text 988. Learn more at 988.maryland.gov and access free community outreach materials in our [988 Toolkit](#). Maryland veterans and their loved ones can call 988 and press 1 to transfer to the Veterans Crisis Line.

Press 2 for Spanish. Option 3 is no longer available. Wait times vary. More information can be found on 988's [What to Expect](#) and [FAQ pages](#).

988 & 911

**BOTH PROVIDE CRITICAL SUPPORT
BUT FOCUS ON DIFFERENT CRISIS TYPES**

988 specializes in behavioral health crises, offering crisis counseling and emotional de-escalation, while **911 addresses** physical dangers needing police, fire, or EMS.

988 | SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE

Protecting Mothers, Strengthening Families

January 23 was Maternal Health Awareness Day, a national day to raise awareness about maternal health and preventable pregnancy-related deaths. Too many families in the U.S. are affected by maternal complications, even though many of these deaths can be prevented with timely, high-quality, and equitable care.

Maternal health is not just about pregnancy and delivery. It also includes the weeks and months after childbirth, when many serious health issues can

occur. Supporting access to prenatal care, postpartum care, mental health services, and emergency response saves lives and strengthens families.

Learn more about maternal health and prevention efforts from the [American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists](#).

8-12th graders: Teen Advisory Council Meeting



Free! 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, February 9 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 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.](#)

HoCo Student Film Festival - HC DrugFree Category

HoCo Student Film Festival – Now Open!

Again this year, HC DrugFree is proud to sponsor a category in the 2025-26 HoCo Student Film Festival. Howard County students are invited to create a Public Service Announcement (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 p.m. at the 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](#).



Free Narcan Training and Kits



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 to receive your Narcan kit: [Learn more](#).

Safe Storage of Meds



A normal day turned into a nightmare in seconds.

A 1-year-old was found unresponsive: his lips turning blue, his breathing shallow. Someone called 911 in panic. First responders rushed in and administered naloxone. The child survived.

Investigators later determined the cause: the toddler had accessed **fentanyl** that was not securely stored. It wasn't intentional. It wasn't malicious. It was a moment of access, and a powerful opioid did the rest.

[Scripps News has documented hundreds of similar cases nationwide](#) involving young children exposed to fentanyl and other opioids in homes, cars, and bags where medications or substances were left unsecured. These incidents are often described by families as “accidents,” but the consequences can be life-threatening in seconds.

Safe storage like locking up legal (and yes, illegal) drugs, keeping them out of reach, and disposing of unused drugs **can mean the difference between a close call and a tragedy.**

Medication boxes help families safely store prescription and over-the-counter medications, reducing the risk of accidental ingestion and misuse. 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. HC DrugFree will distribute more FREE boxes this spring.



Sharps Disposal

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.

Join Our Team in 2026

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!](#)

Your Health, Your Questions: Talking With Your Doctor About Opioids



Talking with your doctor about opioids can feel uncomfortable, but open and honest communication is an important part of staying safe and informed. Whether opioids are being prescribed for pain after a procedure or for a longer-term condition, asking questions helps you understand the benefits, risks, and alternatives so you can make the best decision for your health.

In the *KNOW*...

OPIOIDS

What to ask your doctor before taking opioids:

- Why do I need this medication?
- How long should I take this medication?
- Are there non-opioid alternatives?
- How can I reduce the risk of potential side effects?
- What if I have a history of addiction?
- What if there is a history of addiction in my family?
- Could this treatment interact with my other medication?
- How should I store my opioid medication?
- What should I do with unused opioid medicine?
- Should I carry Naloxone?



HCDrugFree
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www.hcdrugfree.com

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!



HCDrugFree
needs your support!
Help us help Howard County

www.hcdrugfree.org/donate/



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.](#)

[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

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