

# HC DrugFree

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



May is [Mental Health Awareness Month](#), an annual observance founded by Mental Health America in 1949 to highlight the importance of mental wellbeing, educate the public, reduce stigma and promote support for those affected by mental health conditions. Each year, individuals and organizations come together to raise awareness and advocate for better mental health care and resources.

## Enjoy! HC DrugFree PSA Winners



Congratulations to this year's talented [HC DrugFree PSA Category winners!](#)

We are proud to celebrate the creativity, hard work, and powerful messages shared by students through their films. This year's theme aligned with the Drug Enforcement Administration's One Pill Can Kill campaign, highlighting that prescription pills are increasingly being laced with illegal fentanyl and other dangerous substances.

The winning PSA highlighted healthy alternatives to drug use and the dangers of counterfeit drugs.



***From Left to Right:***  
**Srivatsa Pusuluri, Roshan Gopi, Advait Nair, and Guru Velivelli**

The Howard County Student Film Festival would not be possible without the incredible dedication of our Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) advisors and staff. Their time, mentorship, and commitment help make this program a success year after year, and we are deeply grateful for everything they do to support our students.

Please join us in thanking the outstanding Film Fest Advisors and HCPSS staff members:



***Left to Right:***

- Randi Trzesinski – Oakland Mills High School
- Binki McKenna – Retired HCPSS
- Jill Lee – Reservoir High School
- Joan Webb Scornaienchi - Executive Director of HC DrugFree

Watch the winning PSAs [here](#).

Pictured below: HoCo Film Fest T-Shirts in collaboration with HC DrugFree.



View our Medication Take Back and Disposal Slideshow



Check out the highlights from our April 25 Take Back Day event. HC DrugFree is proud to share photos of our community in action to collect **1,215.5 lbs. (43 bins)** of unwanted or expired medications at our Wilde Lake Village Center site.

Would You Recognize It?  
Hidden Products Designed to Disguise Substance Use

Some products designed to conceal substance use are made to look like ordinary everyday items, making them difficult for adults to recognize.

Examples include key fobs with hidden compartments used to store substances and vape devices disguised as working pens that can still write while functioning as vaping devices. These concealment products are part of a growing trend intended to help hide substances in plain sight.

Awareness is one of the most important prevention tools. Staying informed about emerging concealment methods can help parents, caregivers, and educators better recognize warning signs and start conversations with youth. Families can also help reduce risk by practicing safe storage. Medications, alcohol, cannabis, and other substances should always be stored securely and out of reach.

See examples from our friend, Tall Cop:

Key fob concealment device: <https://www.youtube.com/shorts/Ftt-n8heWqg>

Pen disguised as vape: <https://www.youtube.com/shorts/LaA-r1FBYHs>

## Artificial Intelligence: Combatting the Opioid Crisis



Researchers and law enforcement are increasingly using artificial intelligence to help address the opioid epidemic. New AI tools can analyze large amounts of online data to identify trafficking patterns, detect suspicious activity, and help investigators locate drug networks more efficiently than traditional methods alone.

One researcher highlighted by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) is using AI to connect online posts and accounts across platforms in order to better identify opioid traffickers and disrupt illegal distribution networks. As synthetic opioids continue to evolve and spread, technology is becoming an important part of prevention and enforcement efforts.

While innovation can help combat trafficking, prevention remains critical at the community level. Families can continue protecting youth by talking openly about the dangers of counterfeit pills and unknown substances, and by practicing safe storage of medications at home.

## Cychlorophine: A New Synthetic, "Designer" Opioid Wreaking Havoc



Public health officials are monitoring an emerging synthetic opioid called cychlorphine. Like other high-potency opioids, it may be mixed into other substances or found in counterfeit pills, making it difficult to know what is actually being used.

This increases the risk of accidental overdose, as individuals may believe they are taking something less potent. Even small amounts can lead to serious medical emergencies.

This trend reflects a broader concern: unknown or mislabeled substances continue to pose significant risks in communities.

Families can help by talking with youth about the dangers of counterfeit or unknown substances. Safe storage is also important. Keep medications locked, monitored, and out of reach, and properly dispose of unused medications to reduce risk.

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## Teen Advisory Council Meeting & Volunteer Opportunity

Free! HC DrugFree invites **all Howard County students in grades 8-12** to join our Teen Advisory Council (TAC). Our next meeting will be held on Zoom on June 1st from 5:30 to 7:00 p.m.

[RSVP/register](#) to receive the June 1st Zoom link.

**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](#)

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## A Parent and Teens Guide to Social Media



# IMPORTANCE OF PARENTAL OVERSIGHT ON SOCIAL MEDIA



Social media and the internet can be a great way to connect with friends, but it has to be used safely and responsibly.



Ask permission before you make an account with any app, website, or social media.



Share all usernames, passwords, and security questions with your parents.



## SCAMS

Scammers often place fake ads or send spam messages in an attempt to steal identity or credit card information. Adults are better at being suspicious of these things and identifying them as scams!



## STRANGER DANGER

Parental access to chats and social media can prevent communication with strangers, who may be trying to harm, stalk, or prey on young kids. Parents can also restrict inappropriate content.



## SCREEN TIME

Setting limits on screen time can be beneficial to keep children healthy and successful in other areas of life, such as with schoolwork, getting enough exercise and spending time outside. Young brains don't have fully developed

self-regulation skills yet!

**HCDrugFree**  
Empowering the Community

Remember, parental oversight is for safety-- because they care about you, not because they are trying to be mean!

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

QR code and heart icon

Group photo of people in green shirts holding signs

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

[Donate here!](#)

## Resources

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

**Free Narcan Training and Kits:** Be prepared in case of an opioid overdose. [Contact the Howard County Health Department](#)

**The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline:** Marylanders experiencing a mental health or substance use crisis should call or text 988. Go to [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.



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### [Additional Resources](#)

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For more information, contact

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