

HC DrugFree

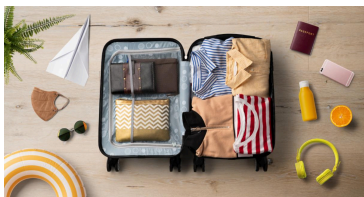
HC DrugFree: Keeping Howard County *in the KNOW!*
...knowledge is power, so just say KNOW



**You don't always
need a plan.
Sometimes you just
need to breathe,
trust, let go and see
what happens.**



-Mandy Hale



June Dates to Remember

June 1-30: [National Migraine and Headache Awareness Month](#)

June 1-30: [Alzheimer's & Brain Awareness Month](#)

June 26: [International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking](#)

The Digital Balancing Act: Social Media and Youth Mental Health

[An advisory from Johns Hopkins Medicine highlights how frequent social media use directly impacts adolescent mental health](#), challenging families to help youth find a healthy balance in their digital lives. Research indicates that heavy, unmonitored scrolling can alter developing areas of the brain responsible for impulse control, emotional regulation, and social behavior.

While social media can offer positive spaces for self-expression and community connection, excessive use is strongly correlated with increased rates of adolescent depression, anxiety, and a profound sense of social isolation despite being constantly "plugged in."

According to pediatric specialists, much of this mental health decline stems from a displacement of basic wellness habits. Time spent online frequently replaces essential real-world activities like physical exercise, time outdoors, and face-to-face family connection. Furthermore, late-night scrolling and screen blue light heavily disrupt sleep patterns, creating a cycle of sleep deprivation that directly worsens depressive symptoms and daily stress. Because every student's developmental needs are different, experts emphasize that there is no single rule for screen time, but rather a unique "sweet spot" of moderation that parents and youth must work together to find. Building a healthy relationship with technology starts with establishing clear, protective boundaries at home.

Parents can support their children by modeling good digital habits, turning off non-essential notifications, and designating screen-free zones—especially in bedrooms during nighttime hours. Encouraging open, regular check-ins about online experiences helps young people develop strong media literacy and protects their long-term emotional well-being. 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.

NEW Teen Advisory Council Registration



Are you ready to make a difference?

Join HC DrugFree's Teen Advisory Council

Registration now open to 8th-12th Graders
Community Service Hours available

HC DrugFree's Teen Advisory Council (TAC) brings together motivated high school students from across Howard County who are passionate about leadership, prevention, advocacy, and making a positive impact in their schools and communities. Members meet monthly to help create prevention campaigns, provide youth perspectives on substance misuse prevention, assist with community events, develop social media content, and strengthen peer-to-peer education efforts throughout the county.

A new application form is now open for the 2026–27 school year. **All students interested in joining TAC, including current members who would like to remain active next year, must complete the new form.** Whether you are returning or applying for the first time, we encourage you to sign up and get involved!

Learn more and apply here: <https://hcdrugfree.org/teen-advisory-council/>

Understanding the Reality of Fentanyl Test Strips



[An investigation featured on the Campus Drug Prevention platform evaluates the real-world effectiveness of fentanyl test strips](#), highlighting that while these harm reduction tools are highly accurate, they are **not a foolproof safety guarantee**. Laboratory data shows that the disposable strips are 96% to 100% accurate at detecting fentanyl and its most common chemical analogs when a sample is dissolved. However, a major physical limitation is what experts call the "chocolate chip cookie" effect: **illicit fentanyl is rarely mixed evenly throughout a counterfeit pill or powder**. If a student only scrapes and tests a tiny corner of a pill, that fragment might test negative while a lethal "hot spot" remains hidden in the rest of the dose, creating a **dangerous sense of false security**.

To use these tools effectively, health professionals emphasize that the safest method is to dissolve the entire intended dose in water for testing rather than just a tiny crumb. Despite these testing hurdles, providing young adults with access to test strips has proven to be a powerful tool for behavioral change. Studies reveal that when a strip detects the presence of fentanyl, over 40% of young adults immediately alter their plans—either by choosing not to use the substance at all, using significantly less, or ensuring they are not alone. Equipping youth with an honest understanding of what these strips can and cannot detect allows them to look past misconceptions and make much safer, more informed decisions.

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.

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](#)

Last Chance to Donate This Fiscal Year!



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!](#)

Resources

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

Free Narcan: The Howard County Health Department offers free Narcan training and kits: [Learn more](#)

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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