

HC DrugFree

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



Have a Safe and Happy 4th of July

For those that will be celebrating this 4th of July weekend with friends and family, taking a break from work, and watching fireworks, here are some tips to keep the celebration safe:

- Before guests arrive, make sure any prescription medications are locked away. Is the pill bottle that you see every day dangerously within reach of children or accessible to teens or adults looking to sneak a few pills? Take a moment to protect your loved ones.
- Plan for a safe way home for yourself or your guests. Walk, schedule an Uber, or choose someone to be your sober driver. Do NOT drive impaired. To learn more about the SoberRide® offered in the DMV, [read below.](#)

Sip Smart, Get Home Safe

Your pre-game checklist



□ Plan Ahead

Make a plan before you go out. Leave your keys at home and designate a non-drinking sober driver.

□ Drink Responsibly

Know your limits and know what you are drinking.

□ Utilize Public Transportation

Did you know that Metro is open until **2:00 a.m.** Friday and Saturday nights and until **12:00 a.m.** Sunday-Thursday?

□ Choose a Rideshare or Taxi

A ride costs a fraction of what a DUI will.

□ Use WRAP's SoberRide® when Available

SoberRide® is offered throughout the year on major holidays. SoberRide® will get you home safe for free (up to \$15) anywhere is Lyft's Washington D.C. coverage area..

WRAP's Upcoming SoberRide® Campaigns

- Independence Day: July 4-July 5
- Halloween: October 31-November 1st
- Winter Holidays: December 18 - January 1st
- Super Bowl (2027)
- St. Patrick's Day (2027)
- Cinco de Mayo (2027)



Celebrate Safely in Howard County



Howard County Executive Calvin Ball, the Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue Services (HCDFRS), and the Howard County Police Department (HCPD) urge residents and businesses to keep their July 4th celebrations safe this holiday weekend.

“As we celebrate our nation's independence and 250th anniversary, let us also renew our commitment to keeping our community safe. Whether you're attending a fireworks display, hosting a backyard barbecue, or traveling to visit loved ones, please keep these precautions in mind to ensure everyone has a safe and good holiday,” said Howard County Executive Calvin Ball.

Read the full press release [here](#).

New MD Laws for 2026



Each July, new laws passed by the Maryland General Assembly go into effect, impacting everything from health and education to driving and drug safety.

Several new Maryland laws may affect healthcare, mental health, and substance use prevention efforts:

- Expanded mental health and substance use insurance protections: Maryland strengthened requirements for insurance companies to improve access to behavioral healthcare.
- Expanded pharmacist involvement in opioid treatment: Pharmacists may play a larger role in treating opioid use disorder through collaborative agreements.
- Improved overdose data tracking: The state updated how prescription monitoring and naloxone data can be managed to strengthen public health responses.

- Greater access to preventive healthcare services: Maryland expanded pharmacists' roles in providing certain preventive services and vaccinations.

To keep you informed, we've created a quick-reference spreadsheet highlighting the laws most relevant to local families and prevention efforts.

[HCDF Summary of MD Laws, Effective July 1, 2026](#)

Full list of laws: [Maryland General Assembly website](#)

Whether you're a parent, educator, or student, staying updated helps keep our community safer and stronger.

Never Leave a Child Alone in a Hot Car



As temperatures rise, parked vehicles can become dangerously hot in a matter of minutes—even on mild days. Infants and young children are especially vulnerable to heat-related illness, which can become life-threatening very quickly.

The Maryland Department of Health reminds all parents and caregivers:

Within only 10 minutes, internal vehicle temperatures can reach lethal levels. Even when it is just 70 degrees outside, a car's interior can soar above 100 degrees in less than half an hour.

Simple prevention steps:

- Always check the back seat before locking your car
- Place a personal item (like your phone or bag) in the back seat as a reminder
- Ask childcare providers to contact you if your child does not arrive as expected
- Keep vehicles locked when parked to prevent children from climbing inside unattended

If you see a child alone in a vehicle: Call 911 immediately. Rapid action can save a life.

A quick check before walking away can prevent a tragedy.

Disability Pride Month

[July is Disability Pride Month](#), a time to celebrate the achievements, experiences, and contributions of people with disabilities and promote inclusive communities where everyone can thrive.

Feeling connected, supported, and valued are important protective factors for youth. Families, schools, and communities can help build resilience by encouraging empathy, celebrating differences, and creating opportunities for everyone to participate and belong.

At HC DrugFree, we know prevention starts with connection. Strong relationships, supportive environments, and a sense of belonging help young people build confidence, healthy coping skills, and lifelong wellbeing.



Are Your Hazards Safely Stored?

As friends and family gather for the 4th of July long weekend, now is the perfect time to double-check your home for hidden hazards, like medications, firearms, and other dangers.

Whether you're hosting guests or teens are having friends over, unsecured prescription and over-the-counter medications can be easy targets for curiosity or misuse. Please take a moment to:

- Lock up medications and firearms in a safe, cabinet, or storage box
- Safely dispose of anything expired or no longer needed
- Keep an eye out for other hazards like cleaning supplies, vape devices, or alcohol

A safe home keeps everyone, especially young visitors, protected. Let's celebrate responsibly and prevent avoidable accidents.

WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT STORING MEDICINE

JUST ONE MINUTE

In ER visits for medicine poisonings, parents often say that they only turned their back for a minute.



CURIOUS CLIMBERS

Research indicates in about half of over-the-counter poisoning cases, the child climbed on a chair, toy or other object to reach medicine.



CHILD-RESISTANT ≠ CHILDPROOF

Research suggests about half of accidental poisonings involved child-resistant packaging.



EVERY 9 MINUTES,

a young child (under age 6) goes to the ER because he/she got into medicine, and



EVERY HOUR,

a young child is hospitalized, and



EVERY 12 DAYS

a young child dies.



UV Safety Month

Summer is in full swing in Howard County! While we all love the sunshine, it's important to remember that ultraviolet (UV) rays from the sun can be harmful year-round, especially during the long days of July

Did You Know?

- 1 in 5 Americans will develop skin cancer by age 70.
- Even on cloudy days, up to 80% of UV rays can reach your skin.
- Children and teens are especially at risk because they spend more time outdoors.

Stay Safe in the Sun:

- Use broad-spectrum sunscreen with SPF 30 or higher and reapply every 2 hours.
- Wear sunglasses that block 100% of UVA and UVB rays.
- Avoid peak sun hours (10 AM to 4 PM) when UV radiation is strongest.
- Seek shade and wear protective clothing like wide-brimmed hats and long sleeves.

Teaching your children about sun safety today can prevent skin damage and serious health issues later. Don't let a sunburn now lead to regrets later.

 **Weill Cornell Medicine**
July Is
**UV Safety
Awareness Month**



While sunshine is essential for your body to process vitamin D, ultraviolet (UV) radiation can quickly damage your skin, no matter your skin tone.

1 in 5

1 in 5 Americans get skin cancer.



Skin cancer is the most common type of cancer in the United States.



UV light exposure causes most skin cancers.



Just five sunburns doubles your risk of developing melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer.



Sun safety is easy:

Stay in the shade when possible.

Stay inside when the sun is at its brightest.

Use broad-spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of at least 30 and reapply frequently.

Wear a hat, long sleeves and sunglasses.



Indoor tanning beds have been designated by the International Agency for Research on Cancer as "carcinogenic to humans" since 2009.

The risk of developing melanoma increases by 75% if you start using tanning beds before age 35.

Most skin cancers are treatable when caught early.
People with naturally darker skin are less likely to get early treatment for possible skin cancers.

Need a dermatologist and more skin care safety tips?
Find a provider at wellcornell.org

 **Weill Cornell Medicine**

National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month



**NATIONAL
MINORITY
MENTAL HEALTH
AWARENESS MONTH
JULY**

Each July, National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month brings attention to the unique mental health challenges faced by racial and ethnic minority communities. There are significant disparities in access to resources for people

of various backgrounds. Other factors like stigma, cultural barriers, and lack of representation in care continue to prevent many individuals from receiving the support they need.

In Howard County and beyond, people of color are often [less likely](#) to receive timely, appropriate mental health treatment, even though the stressors they experience, including racism, discrimination, and systemic inequality, can increase the risk of anxiety, depression, and substance use.

This month, let's commit to fostering mental wellness for all by:

- Listening to and uplifting diverse voices
- Reducing stigma around seeking help
- Advocating for more inclusive, culturally competent care
- Sharing local resources and support networks

You're not alone, and neither is your teen. Together, we can help build a more equitable and supportive mental health system for everyone.

→ [Learn more and get involved](#)



Teen Registration OPEN

It's time to get your 2026-27 registration submitted!!!

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

Stay In the Loop: Follow Us Online!

Want real-time updates and powerful stories from our community?

Follow HC DrugFree on Facebook, Instagram, X, 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](#)

X: [@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!](#)

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 and press 2 for Spanish.

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

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