

HC DrugFree

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

**"Nothing is impossible,
the word itself says
I'm possible."**

-Audrey Hepburn

The Possibilities are Endless, so...
Apply Today
to Make a Difference in HoCo!

After 17 years as Executive Director, **Joan Webb Scornaienchi** will transition from the Executive Director role in August 2026 and will continue supporting the organization as an **Advisor to the Board and Leadership Team**.

We are looking for the **ideal candidate** to bring strategic vision, nonprofit leadership with grant writing/fundraising experience, and a passion for advancing the organization's mission and impact.

Please visit our [website](https://www.hcdrugfree.org) to apply or contact the board at:
Board@hcdrugfree.org

Join Our Team



Apply Today!!

Executive Director

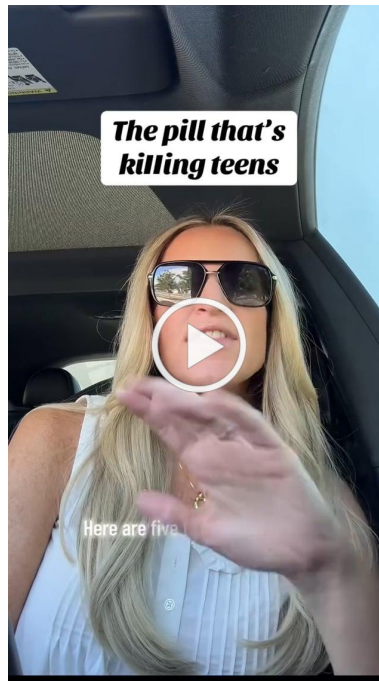
Visit [HC DrugFree's Employment Page](#) for more information.

Tell your friends and help us to spread the word.

Back-to-School Safety Videos for Teens & Parents

As students prepare to head back to school, a little prevention can go a long way. The Damsel in Defense Facebook page features a series of short, practical videos covering important safety topics for middle and high school students.

These include recognizing the dangers of fentanyl and counterfeit pills, staying aware of your surroundings, handling uncomfortable situations, practicing online safety, and making smart decisions when spending time with friends. The videos are designed to spark meaningful conversations between parents and teens and reinforce habits that help keep young people safe both in and out of school. Consider watching a few together before the first day of school.



[Fentanyl Safety Video](#)

More: [Prepping for High School](#)

The Changing Science of Weed and The Adolescent Brain



[Recent medical research warns that regular cannabis use is linked to structural brain cell loss](#), highlighting that modern, high-potency marijuana affects developing minds much differently than many realize.

Mental health professionals are increasingly warning that [regular use can trigger severe psychological breaks, severe mood shifts, and deep reality distortions](#).

The mental health risks amplify significantly when cannabis is combined with other habits common in teen social circles. A study published in *Nature Mental Health* reveals that [individuals who co-use marijuana and tobacco are nearly three times more likely to develop psychosis](#) than those who don't use either substance.

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.

[Learn more](#)

NEW Teen Advisory Council Registration



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](#)

[Apply here](#)

Supporting Our Youth: Maryland Mental Health Data

When we think about our kids' well-being, it can be easy to assume that deep emotional distress is something that only happens to older demographics or in distant communities. However, the latest [2024/25 Maryland Youth Risk Behavior Survey \(YRBS\)](#) brings forward some incredibly heavy reality checks that every family needs to hear.

Key findings from the data include:

- **27.5%** of non-Hispanic Black middle school students reported seriously considering suicide, and **11.8%** reported attempting suicide.
- Among non-Hispanic Black high school students, **14.9%** reported seriously considering suicide, and **9.2%** reported a suicide attempt.
- Hispanic/Latina high school students reported the highest rate of suicide attempts (**17.7%**), highlighting a particularly vulnerable population.

Families can help strengthen youth resilience by:

- Building strong, positive family connections through regular communication.
- Encouraging open, judgment-free conversations about mental health.
- Celebrating and supporting a child's cultural identity and sense of belonging.
- Helping young people identify trusted adults they can turn to when they need support.
- Seeking culturally responsive mental health resources when additional help is needed.

[Click here to explore the full Maryland YRBS data and reports.](#)

Deceptive Designs: Modern "Stealth Vapes" Evade Detection



The landscape of adolescent nicotine and cannabis consumption has evolved far beyond traditional, easily recognizable e-cigarettes. Today, manufacturers deliberately engineer "stealth vapes", devices carefully disguised to look exactly like common school supplies, toys, and apparel.

For instance, novelty products look identical to high-quality neon highlighters down to the cursive font and satisfying plastic cap click, hiding a functional battery and cartridge inside. Other widely documented designs conceal vaping hardware inside everyday items like smartwatches, phone cases, wearable hoodies with built-in drawstring mouthpieces, and school backpacks with

hidden shoulder strap tubing. This deceptive engineering allows underage substance use to hide completely in plain sight from parents, coaches, and educators.

When identifying these devices at home or school, look for subtle signs that distinguish them from everyday items, such as hidden USB charging ports, small LED indicator lights, unusual seams, or an unexpected weight.

The popularity of these concealed products is driven by social media, where "stealth vaping" videos, product demonstrations, and concealment tips spread rapidly. Youth can also easily find these products online through search engines and AI tools, making them more accessible than ever.

Staying informed helps families recognize these evolving trends and start open, judgment-free conversations about the influence of social media and marketing. Families can also reduce risk by securely storing medications, alcohol, cannabis, and other substances out of children's reach.

[Read more](#)

Maryland's Non-Fatal Overdose Trends



The Maryland Department of Health recently released its [2024 Drug Overdose Surveillance and Epidemiology \(DOSE\) Annual Report](#) as well as their [official state announcement](#).

In a encouraging sign of progress, the report highlights an approximate **20% decrease** in emergency department (ED) visits for suspected non-fatal drug overdoses compared to the previous year. However, the overall volume remains remarkably high, with **over 20,000 ED visits** recorded. Opioids continue to drive a massive portion of these medical crises, accounting for more than one-third (**36.8%**) of all suspected non-fatal overdose emergency room visits throughout 2024.

When looking at emergency medical services (EMS) dispatch data, the highest call rates for suspected non-fatal opioid overdoses were heavily concentrated in three distinct areas: Baltimore City (**931.9 per 100,000 residents**), Washington County (**340.6 per 100,000**), and Cecil County (**293.2 per 100,000**).

The data shows that when a suspected opioid overdose occurred, everyday citizens and local heroes stepped up to help before paramedics could even arrive. In fact, laypersons and law enforcement responders made up the vast majority of bystanders who successfully administered lifesaving naloxone (Narcan). This included **187 everyday citizens (29.5%)** and **180 law enforcement officers (28.4%)** taking immediate action. These numbers

underscore that keeping Narcan accessible at home and knowing how to respond remain our most powerful tools to protect our neighbors and loved ones.

Families can also help reduce risk by educating children about substance use, 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, 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](#)

What Do You Think?

Please take our 2-second survey to let us know what you think of the content provided in this newsletter!

[Feedback Survey](#)

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!](#)

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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