

HCDrugFree

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

"The beauty of February lies in its simplicity –
love and be loved."

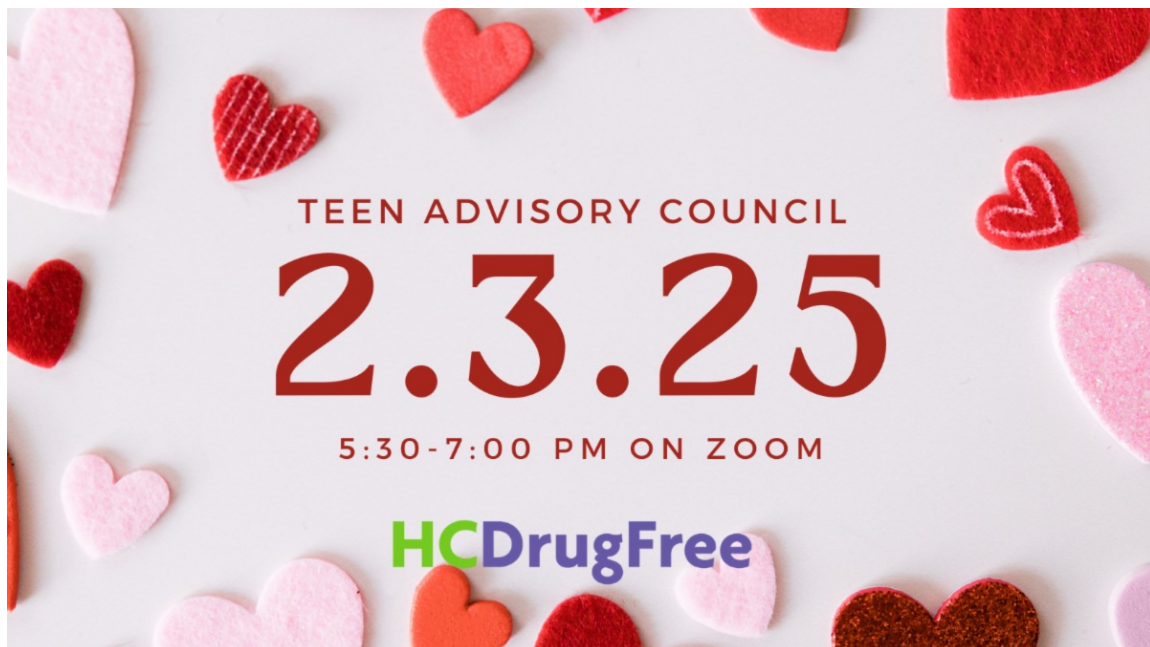


-Anonymous

Dates to Remember in February

February 7: **Wear Red Day**
February 9: **Super Bowl Sunday**
February 11: **Safer Internet Day** and **Make a Friend Day**
February 13: **Galentine's Day** (not just for gals)
February 14: **Valentine's Day**
February 17: **Random Acts of Kindness Day**
February 26: **Set a Good Example Day**

Teen Meeting: Monday, February 3



HC DrugFree invites **all Howard County students in grades 8-12** to attend our Monday, February 3 Teen Advisory Council (TAC) Meeting from 5:30 to 7:00 p.m. on Zoom.

Students: [Register to receive the February meeting link](#)

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 and register](#)

February: Awareness, Education and Action

February is a time to reflect, learn, and take meaningful action on issues that shape our lives and communities. This month, we shine a light on three significant awareness campaigns, each carrying the potential to inspire growth, connection, and positive change.

Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month

Relationships should be built on respect, trust, and care—but for some teens, dating can be a source of harm. Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month is a time to shed light on the issue of unhealthy relationships and equip young people with the tools to recognize warning signs, seek help, and foster healthy connections. By opening up conversations at home and in schools, we can empower teens to prioritize their emotional and physical safety in relationships.

American Heart Month

Your heart does so much for you—how can you return the favor? American Heart Month reminds us to focus on cardiovascular health and make choices that support a healthy heart—such as not smoking. From reducing stress and staying active to enjoying heart-healthy meals, small changes can lead to big improvements. This month is also a reminder to check in on your loved ones—encouraging regular health screenings and spreading awareness about the risks of heart disease can save lives.

Black History Month

February is a time to honor and celebrate Black history while simultaneously acknowledging the health disparities within Black communities, including elevated rates of heart disease, maternal health complications, and limited access to mental health care. By raising awareness and supporting initiatives focused on Black health and wellness, we can create stronger, healthier communities for all.

This February, let's celebrate, educate, and take action to strengthen our hearts, relationships, and communities!

On Thursday, January 30, the Howard County Board of Education approved adjustments to **Policy 8080 -Responsible Use of Technology, Digital Tools, and Social Media** and the Student Code of Conduct that is intended to reduce the use of personal devices by students during the student day. The policy changes will take effect on Monday, March 3.



While the Howard County Public School System will provide more information to students, staff and parents/guardians prior to the implementation date, here are the highlights of the adjustments that were adopted by the Board:

- No students, PreKindergarten-12, will be permitted to use cell phones and other personal devices during the student day (first bell to last bell of the day) except for reasons detailed in a student's IEP, 504, or health plan.
- Smart watches will be permitted to be worn to check time but may not be a distraction.
- When a personal device is used in violation of the new policy, the device will be confiscated for the remainder of the student day.
- Students may be in possession of personal devices, but they must be "away and silenced", meaning devices are not able to be seen by either the student or staff member and are set to make no noise.
- Personal laptops may be used for instructional activities in high school when permitted by the teacher.
- A staff member on a school-sponsored field trip may permit the use of a personal technology device by a student in limited situations where capturing a picture or video may be appropriate or contacting a parent/guardian is necessary.

School administrators and school administrators' designees may authorize use of a personal device in rare instances such as an emergency for communication purposes.

HoCo Standing Together Against Bullying

As we reach the halfway point of the school year, the Howard County Public School System reminds families of the importance of creating a safe, welcoming environment for all students. Bullying - whether it's physical, verbal, social, or online - can deeply affect a child's emotional health, social relationships, and academic performance.

What is Bullying?

Bullying involves intentional, repeated aggressive behavior that creates an imbalance of power. It can take several forms, such as:

- Physical: Actions like hitting, shoving, or damaging belongings.
- Verbal: Hurtful words, teasing, or name-calling.
- Social: Spreading rumors, excluding peers, or manipulating friendships.
- Cyberbullying: Using digital tools to intimidate, harass, or threaten others.

What Families Can Do:

Parents and caregivers are key to addressing and preventing bullying. Here are ways you can help:

- Start conversations: Talk openly with your child about their experiences at school and online.
- Stay informed about their online activities: Be aware of how they use social media and other platforms, as cyberbullying can often go unnoticed.
- Lead by example: Demonstrate kindness and respect in your daily interactions to teach your child the same values.
- Teach proactive support: Encourage your child to stand up for peers by seeking help and being a source of encouragement.

Get involved in school initiatives, attend workshops, and stay familiar with anti-bullying policies. For additional resources, visit the [HCPSS Stop Bullying website](#), which also includes a confidential online reporting tool for students, staff, and families.

Registration Open! Classes for Parents/Grandparents

Raising preteens and teens is tough. Wouldn't it be great if adults could take a class that taught us how to help our kids avoid risky behaviors, all while learning how to say NO to drugs and alcohol? There is!

Register to attend our FREE Spring 2025 Guiding Good Choices® classes for parents, guardians and grandparents. Series will run **Tuesdays and Fridays on March 18, 21, 25, 28 and April 1 from noon to 1:30 p.m. on Zoom**. More information can be found on our [website](#) and [flyer](#).

[Register Here!](#)

Registration Open! Life Skills Classes for Middle/High Schoolers

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; however, slightly younger or older students, we will consider each request, so please register now. **High schoolers** also have the opportunity to volunteer to assist our instructional team of college instructors and earn community service hours.

The 8-class series will run across the following **Mondays: February 24, March 3, 10, 17, 24, April 7, 28 and May 5 from 5:00 to 6:30 p.m. on Zoom**.

This FREE 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.

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

Click here to register HoCo Middle School Students (and HoCo High School Students not wanting to join our team to earn Community Service Hours)

Click here to register HoCo High School Students wanting to join on our instructional team to earn Community Service Hours

Love Means Protecting Your Loved Ones

Don't be your loved ones' drug dealer!

When storing medications...

- Keep it out of reach and out of sight
- Use child safety caps
- Keep an inventory to monitor usage
- Utilize a medication lockbox
- Speak to family and guests about medication safety

Are you IN THE KNOW about proper medication storage? [Learn more](#)



HoCo Film Fest: Enter HC DrugFree PSA Category



Join HC DrugFree for another year of creative filmmaking fun at the HoCo Student Film Festival.

The film submission deadline: **Midnight on April 1.**

HC DrugFree's 2024-25 Category theme is: ***Make the Call: Help Without***



Hesitation. This category was chosen to allow teens the opportunity to create public service announcements (PSAs) informing their peers and the community about **Maryland's Good Samaritan Law**. [Learn more about our PSA Category.](#)

Maryland's Good Samaritan Law protects individuals who seek help during a medical emergency related to drug or alcohol use. Under this law, people who call 911 to assist someone experiencing an overdose or other serious medical issue are protected from arrest, prosecution, and certain legal penalties for minor drug and alcohol offenses. [Learn more about the Good Samaritan Law.](#)

The Cost of "Free"



The cost of FREE services and resources is increasing. This newsletter, teen meetings, teen/adult classes, medication storage boxes, medication collection events, social media accounts, t-shirts for volunteers, etc., all cost more than they did a few years ago. Your support allows us to provide these resources and events at no cost to HoCo youth or adults. Please donate today.

To stand with us and support our mission, please visit hcdrugfree.org/donate

Donate here!

Or mail your **donation** to HC DrugFree's office:

HC DrugFree
5305 Village Center Drive, Suite 206
Wilde Lake Village Center
Columbia, Maryland 21044

Resources

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](#)

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. Press 3 for LGBTQIA+ support.



DEA's Drugs of Abuse Resource Guide:

Education plays a critical role in preventing substance use and misuse. Drugs of Abuse, A DEA Resource Guide, is designed to be a reliable resource on the most commonly used and misused drugs in the US and provides important information about the harms and consequences of drug use by describing a drug's effects on the body and mind, overdose potential, origin, legal status, and other key facts. [Learn more](#)



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](#)



Free Support Meetings:

Looking for a list of Alcoholics Anonymous meetings in the Howard County area? [Learn more](#)

[Additional Resources](#)



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

For more information, contact

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