HOWARD COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Media Release

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Howard County Introduces Free, 24/7 Overdose Prevention Vending Machines

Columbia, MD – The Howard County Health Department has installed two **Naloxone and Safe Choice Vending Machines** to provide free, 24/7, anonymous access to life-saving overdose reversal medication. In addition to two-dose boxes of naloxone, the vending machines offer other tools, including condoms; strips to test for fentanyl, xylazine, barbiturates, and medetomidine; and QR codes linking users to immediate naloxone training and treatment resources. Photos of the machines and their locations may be found on the Health Department's Flickr page.

From June 2025 through May 2026, there were 13 opioid-related deaths in Howard County, according to the Maryland Department of Health Overdose Dashboard. During that same timeframe, Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue Services personnel administered naloxone to 163 individuals.

"Access to naloxone leads to measurable drops in opioid overdose deaths," said **Dr. Maura Rossman, Howard County Health Officer**. "This vending machine investment will help lower the barriers of stigma, cost, and access to these essential resources. We want to provide people with a safe place to get naloxone, test strips, and other safe choice materials, while also providing information on how to get help when they are ready."

"Every life lost to overdose is a tragedy, and expanding access to proven, life-saving tools is one of the most effective ways we can protect our residents," said **Howard County Executive Calvin Ball**. "These new Naloxone and Safe Choice Vending Machines provide free, around-the-clock access to overdose reversal medication, contaminant test strips, and information that can connect individuals to treatment and support services. By removing barriers and increasing accessibility, Howard County is taking another important step to prevent overdose deaths and strengthen the health and well-being of our community."

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The outdoor locations for the vending machines were determined using data from the Howard County Substance Use Dashboard and Overdose Risk Map, along with feedback from stakeholders on accessibility and areas of highest need:

- Grassroots Day Resource Center at Leola Dorsey, 10390 Guilford Rd., Jessup, MD 20794
  - Located on the right side of the front entrance
- Howard County Health Department, 8930 Stanford Blvd., Columbia, MD 21045
  - Located on the right-side entrance of the Health Department building, **under the green Environmental Health awning** near Silverman Treatment Solutions.

Funding for this project was provided through the Howard County Opioid Restitution Fund (ORF), which is administered by the Howard County Department of Community Resources and Services. While all items in the machine are provided free of charge, individuals must input basic demographic information for internal data collection purposes.

“The availability of these no cost vending machines brings relief and pride to my heart,” said **Barbara Allen, Howard County ORF Commission co-chair**. “Relief, because finally anyone hindered by the stigma around substance use disorders can access life-saving options at their convenience. Pride, because our ORF Commission has strongly advocated for these through the proper use of Howard County’s opioid restitution funds. I am truly excited these are now part of the many solutions of hope here in our County!”

More information about opioid misuse prevention, education, outreach, awareness, and training initiatives in Howard County is available on the Health Department website.

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