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Harford County Public Schools Hosts Grassroots Summit: Initiative Against Heroin
HCPS middle & high school students participate in grassroots training event

On Tuesday, February 2, nearly 100 Harford County Public Schools (HCPS) middle and high school students who are members of their school's STARS, SADD or Student Government Association organizations participated in the Grassroots Summit: Initiative Against Heroin event held at the Center for Educational Opportunity in Aberdeen. The event was hosted and sponsored by HCPS, in partnership with the Harford County Government Office of Drug Control Policy, the Harford County Sheriff's Office and the Office of County Executive Barry Glassman.

The goal of the summit was to educate and train students on the heroin epidemic in Harford County. The event brought student leaders together and provided the opportunity to arm them with the knowledge, skills and a plan of action to utilize on the front lines of the fight against heroin among their peers and in their school communities.

"It is essential to equip students with information that they can use when faced with narcotics such as heroin," said Superintendent of Schools Barbara Canavan. "Students will have a friend, a family member or they themselves may face drug abuse at some point in their life. The information they receive today and the action plans they are developing are going to serve them not only in their schools, but in their communities and personal lives."

The summit kicked-off with welcoming remarks from Superintendent Canavan and County Executive Glassman, and then featured sessions such as *What is the Problem?* presented by Joe Ryan, manager of the Harford County Office of Drug Control Policy; *What are we doing?* presented by Lt. Tom Gamble of the Harford County Sheriff's Office; and *Empowering Students to Make a Change* presented by Ginny Popiolek, HCPS supervisor of physical education PK-8 and health education K-12. Following the morning sessions, students broke out into small groups and participated in interactive workshops and idea sharing with each other.

In the breakout sessions, each school's team of students created an action plan using the tools provided in the summit. The student teams will provide a mid-year report and an end-of-year report to HCPS summarizing their actions and results. Students will reflect on the results of their plans to make recommendations for future work and share successes and celebrations.

"As a result of this symposium, students have been empowered to address the crisis of drug abuse, and specifically heroin, as they created action plans to educate other students, parents and the community," said Mrs. Popiolek. "These motivated student leaders will be implementing these plans in the next few months, and I look forward to supporting these initiatives and seeing the impact in Harford County."