

**Dear [NAME OF SCOUT LEADER],**

The opioid crisis continues to take a tragic toll on New Jersey. Last year, more than 2,500 people in the state died of drug overdoses, a majority of which can be attributed to opioids, such as prescription painkillers, heroin and synthetic opioids, including fentanyl.

This crisis has affected people of all backgrounds, regardless of wealth, race, religion or age. New Jersey’s youth, because of their access to prescription opioids to treat such ailments as sports injuries or wisdom teeth removal, are vulnerable to opioid dependency and addiction.

Communities and families throughout the state must be aware of the dangers of prescription opioids and their link to heroin and fentanyl, as well as actions that can be taken to prevent opioid misuse. That effort will continue here in New Jersey in early October on Knock Out Opioid Abuse Day, organized by the Partnership for a Drug-Free New Jersey and partners throughout the state.

Knock Out Opioid Abuse Day has been held in New Jersey on October 6 each year since 2016. The statewide single-day initiative, organized by the Partnership for a Drug-Free New Jersey and The Community Coalition for a Safe & Healthy Morris, in cooperation with the New Jersey Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services and the Governor’s Council on Substance Use Disorder, mobilizes the prevention and treatment communities, community leaders and concerned citizens to raise awareness of the opioid epidemic and the link between prescription painkillers and heroin and fentanyl use.

This year, the Partnership for a Drug-Free New Jersey and participants throughout New Jersey will share important messages about the opioid crisis in person and virtually. We ask that your scouts share information about opioid risks and safety, which will be available at [knockoutday.drugfreenj.org](http://knockoutday.drugfreenj.org). Handouts are also available to distribute in the community.

Service is one of the main pillars of scouting, encouraging youth to help others in their communities while strengthening their abilities as leaders and valued, active members of society. Knock Out Opioid Abuse Day would provide scouts an opportunity to do their daily good turn, in this case, an action that could help people learn potentially lifesaving information on the risks prescription opioids could pose to themselves, their family or their friends.

We hope you can spread the word to your scouts, so they can join us in this important effort to Knock Out Opioid Abuse. For more information and resources, visit [knockoutday.drugfreenj.org](http://knockoutday.drugfreenj.org/) or contact Matt Birchenough at matt@drugfreenj.org.

Sincerely,

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