

One Hundred Sixth Congress
of the
United States of America

AT THE SECOND SESSION

*Begun and held at the City of Washington on Monday,
the twenty-fourth day of January, two thousand*

An Act

To provide assistance for poison prevention and to stabilize the funding of regional
poison control centers.

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of
the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Poison Control Center Enhancement and Awareness Act”.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress makes the following findings:

(1) Each year more than 2,000,000 poisonings are reported to poison control centers throughout the United States. More than 90 percent of these poisonings happen in the home. Fifty-three percent of poisoning victims are children younger than 6 years of age.

(2) Poison control centers are a valuable national resource that provide life-saving and cost-effective public health services. For every dollar spent on poison control centers, \$7 in medical costs are saved. The average cost of a poisoning exposure call is \$32, while the average cost if other parts of the medical system are involved is \$932. Over the last 2 decades, the instability and lack of funding has resulted in a steady decline in the number of poison control centers in the United States. Within just the last year, 2 poison control centers have been forced to close because of funding problems. A third poison control center is scheduled to close in April 1999. Currently, there are 73 such centers.

(3) Stabilizing the funding structure and increasing accessibility to poison control centers will increase the number of United States residents who have access to a certified poison control center, and reduce the inappropriate use of emergency medical services and other more costly health care services.

SEC. 3. DEFINITION.

In this Act, the term “Secretary” means the Secretary of Health and Human Services.

SEC. 4. ESTABLISHMENT OF A NATIONAL TOLL-FREE NUMBER.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—The Secretary shall provide coordination and assistance to regional poison control centers for the establishment of a nationwide toll-free phone number to be used to access such centers.

(b) **RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.**—Nothing in this section shall be construed as prohibiting the establishment or continued operation

of any privately funded nationwide toll-free phone number used to provide advice and other assistance for poisonings or accidental exposures.

(c) **AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**—There is authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section, \$2,000,000 for each of the fiscal years 2000 through 2004. Funds appropriated under this subsection shall not be used to fund any toll-free phone number described in subsection (b).

SEC. 5. ESTABLISHMENT OF NATIONWIDE MEDIA CAMPAIGN.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—The Secretary shall establish a national media campaign to educate the public and health care providers about poison prevention and the availability of poison control resources in local communities and to conduct advertising campaigns concerning the nationwide toll-free number established under section 4.

(b) **CONTRACT WITH ENTITY.**—The Secretary may carry out subsection (a) by entering into contracts with 1 or more nationally recognized media firms for the development and distribution of monthly television, radio, and newspaper public service announcements.

(c) **AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**—There is authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section, \$600,000 for each of the fiscal years 2000 through 2004.

SEC. 6. ESTABLISHMENT OF A GRANT PROGRAM.

(a) **REGIONAL POISON CONTROL CENTERS.**—The Secretary shall award grants to certified regional poison control centers for the purposes of achieving the financial stability of such centers, and for preventing and providing treatment recommendations for poisonings.

(b) **OTHER IMPROVEMENTS.**—The Secretary shall also use amounts received under this section to—

- (1) develop standard education programs;
- (2) develop standard patient management protocols for commonly encountered toxic exposures;
- (3) improve and expand the poison control data collection systems;
- (4) improve national toxic exposure surveillance; and
- (5) expand the physician/medical toxicologist supervision of poison control centers.

(c) **CERTIFICATION.**—Except as provided in subsection (d), the Secretary may make a grant to a center under subsection (a) only if—

- (1) the center has been certified by a professional organization in the field of poison control, and the Secretary has approved the organization as having in effect standards for certification that reasonably provide for the protection of the public health with respect to poisoning; or

- (2) the center has been certified by a State government, and the Secretary has approved the State government as having in effect standards for certification that reasonably provide for the protection of the public health with respect to poisoning.

(d) **WAIVER OF CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS.**—

- (1) **IN GENERAL.**—The Secretary may grant a waiver of the certification requirement of subsection (c) with respect to a noncertified poison control center or a newly established center that applies for a grant under this section if such center

can reasonably demonstrate that the center will obtain such a certification within a reasonable period of time as determined appropriate by the Secretary.

(2) RENEWAL.—The Secretary may only renew a waiver under paragraph (1) for a period of 3 years.

(e) SUPPLEMENT NOT SUPPLANT.—Amounts made available to a poison control center under this section shall be used to supplement and not supplant other Federal, State, or local funds provided for such center.

(f) MAINTENANCE OF EFFORT.—A poison control center, in utilizing the proceeds of a grant under this section, shall maintain the expenditures of the center for activities of the center at a level that is not less than the level of such expenditures maintained by the center for the fiscal year preceding the fiscal year for which the grant is received.

(g) MATCHING REQUIREMENT.—The Secretary may impose a matching requirement with respect to amounts provided under a grant under this section if the Secretary determines appropriate.

(h) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section, \$25,000,000 for each of the fiscal years 2000 through 2004.

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

*Vice President of the United States and
President of the Senate.*