

106TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# S. 632

---

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SEPTEMBER 8, 1999

Referred to the Committee on Commerce

---

## AN ACT

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

1       *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2       *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3       **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

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

1 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

2 Congress makes the following findings:

3 (1) Each year more than 2,000,000 poisonings  
4 are reported to poison control centers throughout  
5 the United States. More than 90 percent of these  
6 poisonings happen in the home. 53 percent of poi-  
7 soning victims are children younger than 6 years of  
8 age.

9 (2) Poison control centers are a valuable na-  
10 tional resource that provide life-saving and cost-ef-  
11 fective public health services. For every dollar spent  
12 on poison control centers, \$7 in medical costs are  
13 saved. The average cost of a poisoning exposure call  
14 is \$32, while the average cost if other parts of the  
15 medical system are involved is \$932. Over the last  
16 2 decades, the instability and lack of funding has re-  
17 sulted in a steady decline in the number of poison  
18 control centers in the United States. Within just the  
19 last year, 2 poison control centers have been forced  
20 to close because of funding problems. A third poison  
21 control center is scheduled to close in April 1999.  
22 Currently, there are 73 such centers.

23 (3) Stabilizing the funding structure and in-  
24 creasing accessibility to poison control centers will  
25 increase the number of United States residents who  
26 have access to a certified poison control center, and

1       reduce the inappropriate use of emergency medical  
2       services and other more costly health care services.

3   **SEC. 3. DEFINITION.**

4       In this Act, the term “Secretary” means the Sec-  
5   retary of Health and Human Services.

6   **SEC. 4. ESTABLISHMENT OF A NATIONAL TOLL-FREE NUM-**  
7                   **BER.**

8       (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall provide co-  
9   ordination and assistance to regional poison control cen-  
10   ters for the establishment of a nationwide toll-free phone  
11   number to be used to access such centers.

12       (b) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this sec-  
13   tion shall be construed as prohibiting the establishment  
14   or continued operation of any privately funded nationwide  
15   toll-free phone number used to provide advice and other  
16   assistance for poisonings or accidental exposures.

17       (c) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is  
18   authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section,  
19   \$2,000,000 for each of the fiscal years 2000 through  
20   2004. Funds appropriated under this subsection shall not  
21   be used to fund any toll-free phone number described in  
22   subsection (b).

1 **SEC. 5. ESTABLISHMENT OF NATIONWIDE MEDIA CAM-**  
 2 **PAIGN.**

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

9 (b) CONTRACT WITH ENTITY.—The Secretary may  
 10 carry out subsection (a) by entering into contracts with  
 11 1 or more nationally recognized media firms for the devel-  
 12 opment and distribution of monthly television, radio, and  
 13 newspaper public service announcements.

14 (c) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is  
 15 authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section,  
 16 \$600,000 for each of the fiscal years 2000 through 2004.

17 **SEC. 6. ESTABLISHMENT OF A GRANT PROGRAM.**

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

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

25 (1) develop standard education programs;

1           (2) develop standard patient management pro-  
2           ocols for commonly encountered toxic exposures;

3           (3) improve and expand the poison control data  
4           collection systems;

5           (4) improve national toxic exposure surveillance;  
6           and

7           (5) expand the physician/medical toxicologist  
8           supervision of poison control centers.

9           (c) CERTIFICATION.—Except as provided in sub-  
10          section (d), the Secretary may make a grant to a center  
11          under subsection (a) only if—

12           (1) the center has been certified by a profes-  
13           sional organization in the field of poison control, and  
14           the Secretary has approved the organization as hav-  
15           ing in effect standards for certification that reason-  
16           ably provide for the protection of the public health  
17           with respect to poisoning; or

18           (2) the center has been certified by a State gov-  
19           ernment, and the Secretary has approved the State  
20           government as having in effect standards for certifi-  
21           cation that reasonably provide for the protection of  
22           the public health with respect to poisoning.

23          (d) WAIVER OF CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS.—

24           (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may grant a  
25          waiver of the certification requirement of subsection

1 (c) with respect to a noncertified poison control cen-  
2 ter or a newly established center that applies for a  
3 grant under this section if such center can reason-  
4 ably demonstrate that the center will obtain such a  
5 certification within a reasonable period of time as  
6 determined appropriate by the Secretary.

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

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

14 (f) MAINTENANCE OF EFFORT.—A poison control  
15 center, in utilizing the proceeds of a grant under this sec-  
16 tion, shall maintain the expenditures of the center for ac-  
17 tivities of the center at a level that is not less than the  
18 level of such expenditures maintained by the center for  
19 the fiscal year preceding the fiscal year for which the  
20 grant is received.

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

1       (h) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is  
2 authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section,  
3 \$25,000,000 for each of the fiscal years 2000 through  
4 2004.

Passed the Senate August 5, 1999.

Attest:

GARY SISCO,  
*Secretary.*