

Public Law 110–377  
110th Congress

An Act

To amend the Public Health Service Act to reauthorize the poison center national toll-free number, national media campaign, and grant program to provide assistance for poison prevention, sustain the funding of poison centers, and enhance the public health of people of the United States.

Oct. 8, 2008  
[S. 2932]

*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 Center Support, Enhancement, and Awareness Act of 2008”.

Poison Center  
Support,  
Enhancement,  
and Awareness  
Act of 2008.  
42 USC 201 note.

**SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

Congress makes the following findings:

(1) Poison control centers are the primary defense of the United States against injury and deaths from poisoning. Twenty-four hours a day, the general public as well as health care practitioners contact their local poison control centers for help in diagnosing and treating victims of poisoning. In 2007, more than 4,000,000 calls were managed by poison control centers providing ready and direct access for all people of the United States, including many underserved populations in the United States, with vital emergency public health information and response.

(2) Poisoning is the second most common form of unintentional death in the United States. In any given year, there will be between 3,000,000 and 5,000,000 poison exposures. Sixty percent of these exposures will involve children under the age of 6 who are exposed to toxins in their home. Poisoning accounts for 285,000 hospitalizations, 1,200,000 days of acute hospital care, and more than 26,000 fatalities in 2005.

(3) In 2008, the Harvard Injury Control Research Center reported that poisonings from accidents and unknown circumstances more than tripled in rate since 1990. In 2005, the last year for which data are available, 26,858 people died from accidental or unknown poisonings. This represents an increase of 20,000 since 1990 and an increase of 2,400 between 2004 and 2005. Fatalities from poisoning are increasing in the United States in near epidemic proportions. The funding of programs to reverse this trend is needed now more than ever.

(4) In 2004, The Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences recommended that “Congress should amend the current Poison Control Center Enhancement and Awareness Act Amendments of 2003 to provide sufficient

42 USC 300d–71  
note.

funding to support the proposed Poison Prevention and Control System with its national network of poison centers. Support for the core activities at the current level of service is estimated to require more than \$100 million annually.”.

(5) Sustaining the funding structure and increasing accessibility to poison control centers will promote the utilization of poison control centers and reduce the inappropriate use of emergency medical services and other more costly health care services. The 2004 Institute of Medicine Report to Congress determined that for every \$1 invested in the Nation’s poison control centers \$7 of health care costs are saved. In 2005, direct Federal health care program savings totaled in excess of \$525,000,000 as the result of poison control center public health services.

(6) More than 30 percent of the cost savings and financial benefits of the Nation’s network of poison control centers are realized annually by Federal health care programs (estimated to be more than \$1,000,000,000), yet Federal funding support (as demonstrated by the annual authorization of \$30,100,000 in Public Law 108-194) comprises less than 11 percent of the annual network expenditures of poison centers.

(7) Real-time data collected from the Nation’s certified poison control centers can be an important source of information for the detection, monitoring, and response for contamination of the air, water, pharmaceutical, or food supply.

(8) In the event of a terrorist event, poison control centers will be relied upon as a critical source for accurate medical information and public health emergency response concerning the treatment of patients who have had an exposure to a chemical, radiological, or biological agent.

### **SEC. 3. REAUTHORIZATION OF POISON CONTROL CENTERS NATIONAL TOLL-FREE NUMBER.**

Section 1271 of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 300d-71) is amended to read as follows:

#### **“SEC. 1271. MAINTENANCE OF THE NATIONAL TOLL-FREE NUMBER.**

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

“(b) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated \$2,000,000 for fiscal year 2009 to carry out this section, and \$700,000 for each of fiscal years 2010 through 2014 for the maintenance of the nationwide toll free phone number under subsection (a).”.

### **SEC. 4. REAUTHORIZATION OF NATIONWIDE MEDIA CAMPAIGN TO PROMOTE POISON CONTROL CENTER UTILIZATION.**

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 1272 of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 300d-72) is amended to read as follows:

#### **“SEC. 1272. NATIONWIDE MEDIA CAMPAIGN TO PROMOTE POISON CONTROL CENTER UTILIZATION.**

“(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall carry out, and expand upon, a national media campaign to educate the public and health care providers about poison prevention and the availability of poison

control center resources in local communities and to conduct advertising campaigns concerning the nationwide toll-free number established under section 1271(a).

“(b) **CONTRACT WITH ENTITY.**—The Secretary may carry out subsection (a) by entering into contracts with one or more public or private entities, including nationally recognized organizations in the field of poison control and national media firms, for the development and implementation of a nationwide poison prevention and poison control center awareness campaign, which may include—

“(1) the development and distribution of poison prevention and poison control center awareness materials;

“(2) television, radio, Internet, and newspaper public service announcements; and

“(3) other activities to provide for public and professional awareness and education.

“(c) **EVALUATION.**—The Secretary shall—

“(1) establish baseline measures and benchmarks to quantitatively evaluate the impact of the nationwide media campaign carried out under this section; and

“(2) on an annual basis, prepare and submit to the appropriate committees of Congress, an evaluation of the nationwide media campaign.

“(d) **AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**—There is authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section, such sums as may be necessary for fiscal year 2009, and \$800,000 for each of fiscal years 2010 through 2014.”

(b) **EFFECTIVE DATE.**—The amendment made by this section shall be effective on the date of the enactment of this Act and shall apply to contracts entered into on or after January 1, 2009.

42 USC 300d–72  
note.

**SEC. 5. REAUTHORIZATION OF THE POISON CONTROL CENTER GRANT PROGRAM.**

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—Section 1273 of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 300d–73) is amended to read as follows:

**“SEC. 1273. MAINTENANCE OF THE POISON CONTROL CENTER GRANT PROGRAM.**

“(a) **AUTHORIZATION OF PROGRAM.**—The Secretary shall award grants to poison control centers certified under subsection (c) (or granted a waiver under subsection (d)) and professional organizations in the field of poison control for the purposes of preventing, and providing treatment recommendations for, poisonings and complying with the operational requirements needed to sustain the certification of the center under subsection (c).

“(b) **ADDITIONAL USES OF FUNDS.**—In addition to the purposes described in subsection (a), a poison center or professional organization awarded a grant, contract, or cooperative agreement under such subsection may also use amounts received under such grant, contract, or cooperative agreement—

“(1) to establish and evaluate best practices in the United States for poison prevention, poison control center outreach, and emergency and preparedness programs;

“(2) to research, develop, implement, revise, and communicate standard patient management guidelines for commonly encountered toxic exposures;

“(3) to improve national toxic exposure surveillance by enhancing cooperative activities between poison control centers

in the United States and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention;

“(4) to develop, support, and enhance technology and capabilities of professional organizations in the field of poison control to collect national poisoning, toxic occurrence, and related public health data;

“(5) to develop initiatives to foster the enhanced public health utilization of national poison data collected by organizations described in paragraph (4);

“(6) to support and expand the toxicologic expertise within poison control centers; and

“(7) to improve the capacity of poison control centers to answer high volumes of calls and respond during times of national crisis or other public health emergencies.

“(c) CERTIFICATION.—Except as provided in subsection (d), the Secretary may award a grant to a poison control 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 requirements of subsection (c) with respect to a noncertified poison control 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 renew a waiver under paragraph (1).

“(3) LIMITATION.—In no case may the sum of the number of years for a waiver under paragraph (1) and a renewal under paragraph (2) exceed 5 years. The preceding sentence shall take effect as of the date of the enactment of the Poison Center Support, Enhancement, and Awareness Act of 2008.

Effective date.

“(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 expenditures maintained by the center for the fiscal year preceding the fiscal year for which the grant is received.

“(g) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section, \$27,500,000 for fiscal year 2009, and \$28,600,000 for each of fiscal years 2010 through 2014. The Secretary may utilize not to exceed 8 percent of the amount appropriated under this preceding sentence in each fiscal year for coordination, dissemination, technical assistance, program

evaluation, data activities, and other program administration functions that do not include grants, contracts, or cooperative agreements under subsections (a) and (b), which are determined by the Secretary to be appropriate for carrying out the program under this section.”.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by this section shall be effective as of the date of the enactment of this Act and shall apply to grants made on or after January 1, 2009. 42 USC 300d-73  
note.

Approved October 8, 2008.

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LEGISLATIVE HISTORY—S. 2932 (H.R. 5669):

HOUSE REPORTS: No. 110-681 accompanying H.R. 5669 (Comm. on Energy and Commerce).

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, Vol. 154 (2008):

Sept. 23, considered and passed Senate.

Sept. 25, 26, considered and passed House.

