

TITLE 42 - THE PUBLIC HEALTH AND WELFARE
CHAPTER 6A - PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE
SUBCHAPTER X - TRAUMA CARE
Part G - Poison Control

§ 300d-71. 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).

(July 1, 1944, ch. 373, title XII, § 1271, as added Pub. L. 108-194, § 3, Dec. 19, 2003, 117 Stat. 2889; amended Pub. L. 110-377, § 3, Oct. 8, 2008, 122 Stat. 4064.)

Amendments

2008—Pub. L. 110-377 amended section generally. Prior to amendment, section required the Secretary to coordinate and assist in establishment of nationwide poison control center toll-free phone number, allowed for establishment and continued operation of privately funded nationwide toll-free numbers, and authorized appropriations for fiscal years 2000 through 2009.

Findings

Pub. L. 110-377, § 2, Oct. 8, 2008, 122 Stat. 4063, provided that: “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 [Pub. L. 108-194, see Short Title of 2003 Amendments note set out under section 201 of this title] to provide sufficient 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

NB: This unofficial compilation of the U.S. Code is current as of Jan. 5, 2009 (see <http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/uscpri.html>).

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.”

Pub. L. 108–194, § 2, Dec. 19, 2003, 117 Stat. 2888, provided that: “The Congress finds the following:

“(1) Poison control centers are our Nation’s primary defense against injury and deaths from poisoning. Twenty-four hours a day, the general public as well as health care practitioners contact their local poison centers for help in diagnosing and treating victims of poisoning and other toxic exposures.

“(2) Poisoning is the third most common form of unintentional death in the United States. In any given year, there will be between 2,000,000 and 4,000,000 poison exposures. More than 50 percent of these exposures will involve children under the age of 6 who are exposed to toxic substances in their home. Poisoning accounts for 285,000 hospitalizations, 1,200,000 days of acute hospital care, and 13,000 fatalities annually.

“(3) Stabilizing 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.

“(4) The tragic events of September 11, 2001, and the anthrax cases of October 2001, have dramatically changed our Nation. During this time period, poison centers in many areas of the country were answering thousands of additional calls from concerned residents. Many poison centers were relied upon as a source for accurate medical information about the disease and the complications resulting from prophylactic antibiotic therapy.

“(5) The 2001 Presidential Task Force on Citizen Preparedness in the War on Terrorism recommended that the Poison Control Centers be used as a source of public information and public education regarding potential biological, chemical, and nuclear domestic terrorism.

“(6) The increased demand placed upon poison centers to provide emergency information in the event of a terrorist event involving a biological, chemical, or nuclear toxin will dramatically increase call volume.”