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GOVERNOR ELIMINATES CALIFORNIA'S POISON CONTROL SERVICE

Service that saves California \$70 million in health care costs
and prevents 164,000 emergency room visits annually to
close September 2009

San Francisco, CA (May 20, 2009) – Funding for poison control services has been completely eliminated from the state budget. Beginning in September of 2009, California will become the only state in the nation without any emergency poison control services for residents and medical professionals.

The CPCS manages over 300,000 cases annually – that's 900 every day. The elimination of poison control services will precipitate an immediate shift to more costly and already overburdened sectors of California's healthcare system as residents have no choice but to go directly to an Emergency Department or call 911. However, the health professionals in California's Emergency Departments, hospitals, and 911 services who rely on the CPCS to manage serious poison exposures will not have anywhere to turn for such expert advice.

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CPCS

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The CPCS saves California millions of dollars. In 2008, managing cases through CPCS telephone consultation saved \$70 million in health care costs. Eliminating the service would result in an additional 164,000 emergency room visits, either directly or by ambulance, every year.

This is a service Californians can ill afford to lose on the eve of additional cuts to health care. In this climate of economic uncertainty, the poison control center may be the only immediate and free expert medical service many residents can access.

“More than 50 percent of poisonings happen to children 5 years old and under and more than 90 percent happen at home,” said Stuart Heard, Executive Director of the California Poison Control System. “Without the services that we provide, California’s children will be at risk. This is why we are urging residents to pick up the phone and call the Governor’s office and their legislators to ask that the funding for the California Poison Control System be returned to the budget.”

By calling the Office of the Governor at 916-445-2841 and their local Assembly or Senate member, which can be found by visiting www.leginfo.ca.gov/yourleg.html, Californians can demand that funding for poison control services be immediately reinstated.

Since its inception in 1997, the CPCS has managed over 2,000,000 cases. Clinical pharmacists, registered nurses, physicians and poison information providers answer the phones. A board-certified physician toxicologist is available at all times for specialized consultations from medical facilities seeking expert, current information in managing poison exposures.

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CPCS

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In addition to providing access to poison experts, the CPCS is a central communication system infrastructure that can handle thousands of calls a day, providing real-time surveillance and identification of critical public health threats and rapid, reliable help during major public health events.

The CPCS has four sites of operation including UC Davis Medical Center in Sacramento, San Francisco General Hospital in San Francisco, Children's Hospital Central California in Fresno and the UC San Diego Medical Center in San Diego. The central office is located at the UC San Francisco Laurel Heights Campus in San Francisco. The CPCS is responsible to the California Emergency Medical Services Authority and administered by the University of California San Francisco School of Pharmacy, Department of Clinical Pharmacy.

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