

Value of Poison Control Services to California

The California Poison Control System (CPCS) helps save lives

- CPCS managed more than 306,000 poison cases in 2002.
- 51% of poisonings involved children 5 and under.
- Poisoning is the third most common form of unintentional death. In the U.S., total direct costs associated with poisoning exceed \$3 billion annually – more than we spend on gunshot wounds, burns or drownings.

CPCS saves money for California

- Every dollar spent on poison control services saves an estimated \$7 in medical spending.
- California saves over \$55 million in health care costs annually as a result of poison control services.
- 20% of callers to CPCS are Medi-Cal Patients. Saves Medi-Cal alone \$11 million.
- 21% of CPCS callers are uninsured. Saves an additional \$11 million.

Poison control services reduce usage of California's overburdened emergency medical system

- In 2002, more than 61,000 emergency department/physician office visits in California were averted by poison control consultations.
- Poison control centers reduce the number of patients medically treated but not hospitalized by 24% and reduce the number of hospitalizations by 12%.
- Nearly 72% of reported poisoning cases in the U.S. are managed at home with assistance from a poison control center.

California's poison control centers operate very efficiently

- In California, cost per poison exposure is 27% lower than the national average and the number of exposure cases managed per full-time employee is 23% greater.
- Poison centers save \$7 for every \$1 of cost. This cost-benefit ratio is more than three times that of child safety seats, smoke detectors, or bicycle helmets.

When poison control centers go away, costs go up and quality of care goes down

- If a PCC had not been available, 79% of callers would have sought assistance from local emergency healthcare. Emergency department costs range from \$95 to more than \$400. Ambulance transport and dispatch may involve an additional \$150 - \$600.
- During a 15-month period when PCC services were unavailable to Contra Costa County, the most frequent alternative sought was 9-1-1 (55%). An additional 29% sought medical care elsewhere in the healthcare system.
- Alternative providers such as 9-1-1 dispatchers and advice nurses do not manage most pediatric poisoning calls without assistance from a PCC. Studies have demonstrated that Emergency Medical Dispatchers can manage only 6% of poisoning calls without the need to transfer to PCC staff. Advice nurses were able to manage only 12% of calls.
- Emergency medical doctors will no longer be able to consult with our specialized staff. Currently, 17% of our calls come from health care facilities or medical professionals.

