

For Immediate Release
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Family caregivers have a friend at the Poison Center

Over a half million families in Washington State are caring for an adult who needs care or is raising a relative's child. National Family Caregivers Month - observed every November - is a nationally recognized month seeking to draw attention to the many challenges facing family caregivers, advocate for stronger public policy to address family caregiving issues, and raise awareness about community programs that support family caregivers.

The Washington Poison Center (WAPC) is one community program that is available to all family caregivers 24/7 at no charge. Calling the Poison Help hotline at 1-800-222-1222 will connect you to the WAPC's specially-trained pharmacists, nurses and poison specialists.

"We are often thought of for helping when a child gets into a possible poison," said WAPC's Executive Director, Jim Williams. "We want to especially make sure caregivers of adults are aware they can get the same quality of help." It is not unusual that caregivers need help managing medications because Americans fill an average of 22 prescriptions per year. Seniors, on average are taking 5-6 medications at any given time, each for a specific health problem.

Kathy Ribik of Woodinville, recently and unexpectedly became a caregiver of her 85 year old mother. "We left the hospital with a bunch of new medications and even more questions," Ribik said. "Just knowing there is a free, medical resource available to me all the time is comforting." Ribik has the toll-free Poison Help number, 1-800-222-1222 programmed into her phone.

Poisoning is the number one cause of accidental death in Washington State, surpassing auto accidents. Many people are surprised to hear who is dying: adults, ages 45 to 65. Call the Poison Center with questions about medications or if a poisoning is suspected. With 24/7 access to a physician toxicologist and a database containing information on millions of drugs, chemicals and toxins, the WAPC staff has the expertise to help treat and prevent a poisoning for people of all ages.

All calls to the Poison Center are free and confidential. Services are available for non-English speakers and for the deaf and hearing impaired. For more information, visit www.wapc.org.

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