

For Immediate Release
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Noticeable changes to the Poison Center

The Washington Poison Center (WAPC) is among several nonprofit organizations that will be receiving less in funding support from the state's recently signed 2009-2011 budget. State funding support for WAPC's services was cut by 37%. Historically state funding support for WAPC services, which is mandated by state statute, has represented 80% of the WAPC's total revenue.

The State Legislature, working with the State Department of Health, local and regional hospitals and other state wide organizations created the WAPC in 1994 as an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. It was designed to be a public-private partnership, with the legislature agreeing to fund the core operating budget through a contract with the Department of Health. Remaining support was to come from the private sector to provide the full funding necessary to operate the center.

With a significant loss in state funds, the WAPC is forced to make some major changes to its operations. Changes likely to be noticed within the next few weeks include:

- Wait times while on hold
- Calls initially being answered by an electronic phone-tree system
- Credit card payment of \$30 prior to answering questions about animals
- A substantial decrease in poison prevention education and outreach to the community

The WAPC will continue to provide free (with the exception of animal calls), local expert treatment advice -- 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, available in 140 languages. Staff will remain specially-trained pharmacists, nurses and poison specialists and backed by a physician toxicologist. Callers will continue to get the expert help they need when they call **1-800-222-1222**.

For more information or to volunteer for the WAPC, please visit www.wapc.org.

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