



Poison Control Funding for Virginia FY 2010: The Facts

The Governor's proposed FY 2010 budget cuts poison control funding by 68% (from \$1,549,691 to \$500,000) and requires consolidation of the state's three poison control centers to a single statewide center.

Actions required:

- Restore poison control funding.
 - Oppose consolidation.
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Fact: 71,000 poison emergencies require expert 24/7 poison control consultation each year in Virginia.

- **The proposed budget cut will not save money. It will increase the Commonwealth's costs.**

- 5 peer-reviewed studies show that every dollar spent on poison control services saves \$6 to \$13 of unnecessary health care costs -- by preventing unnecessary ambulance transports, ER visits, and hospitalizations, and by shortening hospital stays.

Result: Cutting \$1 million in poison control services will cost Virginians \$6 to \$13 million in unnecessary health care expenses.

- Most of the cost of service is personnel. The budget fails to recognize that whether at one site or three, the same total number of highly trained Specialists in Poison Information will be required.
- The 3 poison control centers and their host institutions already subsidize Virginia's poison control system to the tune of \$2.17 million.

Result: About \$1.5 million of that local subsidy will be lost if 2 centers are closed, and the state will have to make it up.

- **Forced closure of two of Virginia's 3 certified poison centers will undermine quality, accessibility, stability, and surge capacity.**

- The one remaining center would face an expensive 2-3 year transition to hire and train new staff to replace the certified and experienced Specialists at the 2 shuttered centers.
- Due to Virginia's geographic diversity, large distances, multiple health professional training sites, and distributed population centers, closure of 2 centers will lead to drastic reductions of:
 - Poison prevention outreach,
 - Training of health professionals,
 - Toxicologist participation in local preparedness efforts,
 - Toxicologist availability for recognition, detection and response to public health and terrorist threats,
 - Surge capacity and disaster preparedness, and
 - Poison center utilization.

- **The majority of Virginians could lose access to poison control services, jeopardizing lives.**

With no access to poison control:

- Medical providers will not have access to state-of-the-art guidance to treat poisonings.
- Parents and patients will make uninformed decisions – avoiding or delaying life-saving care.