

To whom it may concern:

I understand, that once again, funding for the Poison Control Center is under review. In this challenging time of diminished revenue and escalating costs, it is crucial to keep our most centralized, efficient and cost effective services in place. As a tax payer, I would happily support the minimal household contribution required to maintain this invaluable service. A 911 type phone surcharge seems logical and equitable to me, but I'm sure you have a more comprehensive awareness of possible funding options.

Our experiences with the Poison Control Center (PCC), I believe, are very "typical" in most details, but unusual in the number of times throughout the years that we have called.

My family moved to southern Oregon 17 years ago. The middle of our three children, now 20 years old, has Down Syndrome and is Autistic. She is in most ways a healthy, active & curious child but has remained at about a 2 year old level of cognitive functioning. She has extremely limited verbal ability, no awareness of safety issues and must be watched and safeguarded at all times. To say that we have tried to "CHILDPROOF" our home is an understatement. We have magnetic TOT locks on nearly every cabinet in the house, our yard contains only nasturtiums, rosemary & other safe non-toxic plants, our style of interior décor is best described as "defensive." We are acutely aware of where our daughter is and what she is doing, at nearly every moment of her waking day. And yet, we have called PCC over 20 times.

In each case, we were "watching" our daughter and believed all our childproofing measures to be in place. I have been within 30 feet of her on nearly every occasion when an incident took place. But... a childproof bottle of ibuprophen wasn't closed properly, a cabinet containing antibiotics didn't latch, a teenage siblings friend didn't realize they shouldn't leave toiletries & make-up laying around, the spackle from a painting project didn't get put away, the flowers in a funeral arrangement were poisonous, the floral clay in our Christmas centerpiece looked tasty, a 500 count bottle of vitamins were dropped & she gobbled several before we could get them out of reach, she licked the lacquer finish off of a Christmas ornament, some sunscreen got left in a backseat car cubby... No matter how hard you try, there is always going to be a "chink in the armor" of one's best childproofing. It's somewhat of a miracle that we've **only** called about 20 times in over 7,000 days.

It's no surprise that the PCC phone number is prominently posted by every one of our phones and in our cell phone contacts. We brief every childcare giver to call PCC any time they think our daughter may have gotten into something. What is a surprise is that we have gone to a hospital only once, ironically when Brie ingested the "harmless" silica fill from her diaper. Although we knew it was inert & non-toxic, we called PCC to be sure. They advised us to go immediately to the ER & to on no account give her liquids due to the risk of blocking her airway as the material would absorbed them and swell. On all of the other occasions when we have called **we have been able to stay at home.** PCC has been able to access relevant data bases for all substances and to work with us to

figure out what the concerns would be. Because we stayed at home, it was easier access information on container labels and to more accurately estimate how many pills, or how much plant material or liquid might have actually been ingested--much better than going to a hospital without the "evidence" at hand and having to take more conservative/invasive actions for "worst case" estimates of these quantities. Because we were at home, it was easier to assess Brie's behavioral changes & symptoms--she is never her normal self in a hospital setting & managing her care can be very difficult due to her being essentially an adult sized toddler.

In addition to being calm & competent, PCC staff handles calls in a way that is non-judgmental. I wonder how many parents might not access ER care for a child because someone might think they were a bad/negligent parent. Or how many people would guess/hope/assume that they could "wait & see" if their child was really in distress before risking the expensive trip to seek medical care. Happily, many people would play it safe by going to the ER but, so often, that course would be unwarranted. I used to call my pediatrician's office, but they say **they rely on PCC support** data on the many "uncommon" things that kids get into. The best thing, for us about PCC is knowing we can call them to get immediate, accurate advice and to be certain we are making the right choice. Additionally, they provide guidance on further observations, symptoms to be alert for, and follow up with a call to be sure the situation is stable.

Last summer, our daughter moved into a group home, funded by DHS & with OHP insurance. Her safety plan includes "constant sweeps" for small objects & hazardous items. Staff are trained to call PCC, & undoubtedly, they will need to, no matter how vigilant they are: she is that quick & curious. Human error is inevitable. I can only imagine how many needless and expensive ER visits will be in Brie's future if this essential and cost effective state resource is reduced or eliminated. Please, recognize the tremendous value of this essential service & fund it accordingly.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth S. Whispell, MS Ed  
3238 Auburn Way  
Medford, Oregon