

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 1221

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As Reported By House Committee On:  
Health Care  
Appropriations

**Title:** An act relating to poison information centers.

**Brief Description:** Centralizing poison information services.

**Sponsors:** Representatives G. Cole, Ballard, Flemming, Jacobsen, Veloria, Cothorn, Dellwo, Thibaudeau, Appelwick, Johanson, Orr, Scott, Ballasiotes, Silver, Lisk, Leonard, Cooke, J. Kohl, L. Johnson, Mielke and Kremen.

**Brief History:**

Reported by House Committee on:  
Health Care, February 11, 1993, DPA;  
Appropriations, March 1, 1993, DPS(APP).

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH CARE

**Majority Report:** Do pass as amended. Signed by 15 members: Representatives Dellwo, Chair; L. Johnson, Vice Chair; Dyer, Ranking Minority Member; Ballasiotes, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Appelwick; Campbell; Conway; Cooke; Flemming; R. Johnson; Lisk; Mielke; Morris; Thibaudeau; and Veloria.

**Staff:** Bill Hagens (786-7131).

**Background:** Currently, there are four poison information centers located in the state. They are situated in Seattle, Spokane, Tacoma and Yakima. The centers provide, among other services, emergency telephone management and treatment referral of victims of poisoning.

There are no requirements that state agency poison control programs and outreach units be coordinated, nor for services providing community education programs to improve awareness of poisoning and overdose, occupational risks, and environmental exposures.

The medical director of the poison center must be certified by the secretary of the Department of Health, but there is no similar certification required for a poison information specialist.

There is no authority for a poison center to accept gifts, grants and endowments for the use and benefit of the center.

In 1993 the Legislature asked the Department of Health to recommend a plan to consolidate the poison control services. The department recommended "A single poison center should be established by September 1993, which is affiliated with an existing medical organization...."

**Summary of Amended Bill:** By June 30, 1993, the four poison information programs located throughout the state are to be centralized and coordinated by a single nonprofit center at a place to be determined by the secretary of the Department of Health.

A 24-hour emergency telephone management and treatment referral program is to be provided by the poison information center, to include determinations of whether treatment can be accomplished at the scene of an incident or whether transport to a facility is required. The center is to provide community education programs to the public and for health professionals to improve awareness of poisoning and overdose problems, occupational risks, and environmental exposures. The center is also to coordinate outreach units for public information and education relative to toxicology issues. The Department of Health is directed to establish a system for consulting with other state and local agency programs to develop a coordinated response to exposures, poisonings, and other toxicological matters.

A poison information specialist must be certified by the Secretary of Health in order to perform responsibilities at the center. The poison information center is authorized to accept and use public and private gifts, grants, and endowments for the purposes of the center.

The bill contains an emergency clause.

**Amended Bill Compared to Original Bill:** The amended bill directs the Department of Health to consult with local, as well as state, agencies to develop a coordinated response.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested January 21, 1993.

**Effective Date of Amended Bill:** The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

**Testimony For:** Hospitals can no longer afford to provide poison control services within their own revenue. A state coordinated policy is needed.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Witnesses:** Representative Grace Cole, prime sponsor; Susie Tracy, Washington State Medical Association (pro); Dr. Bill Robertson, Mr. Yuk (pro); Janet Griffith, Department of Health (pro); Ruth Benfield, Children's Hospital (pro); and Steve Bobbink, Seattle Poison Center and Children's Hospital (pro).

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**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS**

**Majority Report:** The substitute bill by Committee on Appropriations be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 27 members: Representatives Locke, Chair; Valle, Vice Chair; Silver, Ranking Minority Member; Carlson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Appelwick; Ballasiotes; Basich; Cooke; Dellwo; Dorn; Dunshee; G. Fisher; Jacobsen; Lemmon; Leonard; Linville; Morton; Peery; Rust; Sehlin; Sheahan; Sommers; Stevens; Talcott; Wang; Wineberry; and Wolfe.

**Staff:** Maureen Morris (786-7152).

**Summary of Recommendation of Committee on Appropriations Compared to Recommendation of Committee on Health Care:** The effective date is changed from immediate to July 1, 1993. A null and void clause is added.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect July 1, 1993.

**Testimony For:** Poison centers provide a life saving service. The current host hospitals cannot continue to subsidize this service. If there were no centers, people would rely on calling 911, their own physician, or going to an emergency room. None of these options would provide access to the specialized knowledge about poisonous substances and treatment for poisoning available at a poison center.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Witnesses:** Ruth Benfield, Seattle Children's Hospital (pro); Bill Roberts, Seattle Poison Center (pro); Susie Tracy, Washington State Medical Association (pro); Rick Wickman, Multicare (pro); and Robb Menaul, Washington State Hospital Association (pro).