



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **American Association of Poison Control Centers Supports Legislative Initiatives Targeting the Responsible Prescription of Opioid Pain Medication**

ALEXANDRIA, VA – The American Association of Poison Control Centers (AAPCC) and the experts at America’s 55 poison centers applaud the efforts of the United States Senate focused on the prevention of opioid addiction, according to Stephen T. Kaminski, JD, AAPCC CEO and executive director.

The *Safe Prescribing of Controlled Substances Act*, introduced by Senator Edward J. Markey on [May 20, 2015](#), would require prescribers of opioid pain medications and other controlled substances to undergo mandatory training on safe prescribing practices and the identification of possible substance abuse disorders. Prescribers applying for a Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) license would be required to complete mandatory education focusing on: best practices for pain management and alternative non-opioid therapies for pain; methods for diagnosing and treating a substance use disorder; linking patients to evidence based treatment for substance use disorders; and tools to manage adherence and diversion of controlled substances.

“We need to prevent prescription drug and heroin addiction before it takes hold, and all of these efforts are a key component of the comprehensive strategy necessary to address this public health crisis,” said Sen. Markey. “We need to stop the over-prescription of opioid pain medication and ensure prescribers are educated in responsible prescribing practices and can identify possible substance use disorders in patients.”

Poison center experts know firsthand the dangers of opioid abuse and misuse. In the last three years alone, over 120,000 opioid-related calls have been placed to the nation’s Poison Help line (1-800-222-1222). And opioids have continuously been found among the top three substances associated with fatalities – between 2008 and 2013, a total of 1,679 deaths were reported, with data from AAPCC’s 2013 National Poison Data System (NPDS) Annual Report being the most up-to-date.

“Poison center calls are sentinel for identifying the problem,” said James Mowry, PharmD, DABAT, FAACT, Indiana Poison Center director and lead author of the 2013 NPDS Annual Report. “This is especially true for heroin and opioid overdoses – our calls mirror what is seen in emergency departments around the country every day.”

“With increased awareness of the Poison Help line and additional funding for education and increased staffing, poison centers could boost their work with the public and other health care providers to minimize disastrous results associated with heroin and opioid abuse,” said Kaminski.

In addition, Sen. Markey and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) have [called on](#) the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to issue a Surgeon General’s Report and call to action on opioid abuse, and a plan to measure progress on the recently-announced federal initiative to reduce prescription opioid- and heroin-related overdose, death, and addiction. AAPCC supports these efforts.

“Trained experts at the nation’s poison centers are on the frontlines working hard every day to prevent poisonings – including the misuse and abuse of painkillers and other drugs,” said Kaminski. “AAPCC praises Sen. Markey’s commitment to safeguarding the health of our nation, and the *Safe Prescribing of Controlled Substances Act* is a commonsense initiative aimed at preventing further prescription painkiller and heroin overdoses. Likewise, we urge HHS to produce a Surgeon General’s report along with a call to action on these abuses.”

For more information, the media may contact Brett Schuster, AAPCC associate manager, Public Relations and Member Services, at 703-894-1865 or [schuster@aapcc.org](mailto:schuster@aapcc.org).

*AAPCC supports the nation’s 55 poison center members in their efforts to treat and prevent drug, consumer product, animal, environmental and food poisoning. Members staff the Poison Help hotline at 1-800-222-1222 that provides free, confidential, expert medical advice 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year from toxicology specialists, including nurses, pharmacists, physicians and poison information providers. In addition, AAPCC maintains the only poison information and surveillance database in the United States, providing real-time monitoring of unusual poisoning patterns, chemical exposures and other emerging public health hazards. AAPCC partners with federal agencies such as HRSA, CDC, FDA and EPA, as well as private industry.*

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