



2019-21 Biennium Budget Decision Package

Agency: 303 - Department of Health
Decision Package Code-Title: 1G - Fund WA Poison Center Operations
Budget Session: 2019-21 Regular
Budget Level: Policy Level
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Agency Recommendation Summary

The Department of Health requests funding for the Washington Poison Control Center (WAPC). In the past 5 years operating costs have significantly increased and additional funding is needed to fulfill its statutory responsibility and address emerging requests from health care system stakeholders.

Fiscal Summary

Dollars in Thousands

Operating Expenditures	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023
Fund 001 - 1	\$328	\$328	\$328	\$328
Total Expenditures	\$328	\$328	\$328	\$328
Biennial Totals		\$656		\$656
Object of Expenditure	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023
Obj. C	\$324	\$324	\$324	\$324
Obj. E	\$4	\$4	\$4	\$4

Package Description

The Washington Poison Control Center (WAPC) is a key component of Washington’s public health system, addressing poison prevention and control. WAPC provides for the 24-hour emergency management and treatment of victims of poisoning and overdose incidents. Additionally, WAPC provides 5 key benefits: 1) accessible and affordable health care service, 2) healthcare cost reduction and dollar savings, 3) assistance with toxico- and public health surveillance, 4) public and professional education, and 5) research data on product safety and toxicity.

WAPC also addresses: 1) emerging drugs of abuse and toxic trends, increasing complex polydrug overdoses, increase in adolescent suicide/overdoses, and the increase in therapeutic errors and overdose in the older

adult population; 2) high priority issues including opioid overdoses (especially the synthetic fentanyl analogues), the increase in unintentional exposures of opioids in young children, unintentional marijuana exposures in young children as well as marijuana use/adverse effects in youth/young adults, increasing serious overdoses in the adolescent population, chemical and radiological threats, and the increasing acuity and complexity of all overdose patients in the hospital setting; 3) long-standing issues of drug overdoses, environmental and poison prevention in general. Unintentional poisoning continues to be one of the leading causes of unintentional injury in Washington state; thus there is an ongoing and increasing need not only for our emergency services, but also public education and community outreach strategic priorities related to prevention and harm reduction. Furthermore, healthcare providers have 24/7/365 access to not only highly trained poison specialists but also board-certified physician toxicologists which increases access to this specialized care to all patients, increases patient safety, reduces liability, and saves healthcare dollars.

In the last year the WAPC has lost two critical staff which had subspecialty certification in clinical toxicology due to much higher salaries than could be offered by WAPC. Training for new staff requires intensive training the onboarding and training time is about six months before they are experienced enough to answer all calls independently and up to two years before there is a full competence and comfort level in the spectrum and complexity of emergency calls. Because of this training, new staff are always required to work in tandem with 1 additional experienced staff increasing salary expenses.

The WAPC estimates it will require an additional \$656,000 each fiscal year (FY) ongoing for:

Salary and Benefits- WAPC has not been able to provide staff with a cost of living increase since 2015, making it difficult to retain highly trained medical and leadership staff, cost of living in the Seattle area is rising at exponential rates and health insurance costs as part of our benefits package continues to escalate

Rent - The commercial real estate market in Seattle and surrounding area is experiencing significant growth, bringing unsustainable increases in our rental costs. Starting November 2018, WAPC's monthly rent will increase by 41 percent, and in 2-years will increase by approximately 45 percent compared to the current cost.

Infrastructure IT- Information technology and telecommunications infrastructure is the backbone of Washington Poison Center operations, ensuring that any Washingtonian needing assistance with a poisoning or toxic exposure has 24/7/365 access to Washington Poison Center emergency telephone helpline services. It is imperative that the WAPC maintains uninterrupted telephone communications to the public, real-time poison data surveillance, a database, and special toxicology resources.

Data Analyst - The Washington Poison Center is called upon regularly to provide data on emerging public health trends to assist public health and public policy leaders, as well as media, in addressing high priority public health issues (ex: suicide, adolescent overdoses, opioid and cannabis overdoses). Currently the Managing Director fills this role, in addition to managing daily call center operations. With data requests significantly increasing over the past two years, the WAPC will need a full-time data analyst position to fulfill numerous data reports-- not only our required deliverables for the Department of Health and Health Care Authority, but other programmatic and research contracts, and hospital community benefit programs.

Assumptions and Calculations

Expansion or alteration of a current program or service:

N/A

Detailed assumptions and calculations:

Funding being requested will be ongoing to cover WAPC salaries, contracted medical toxicologist, IT communications/Infrastructure maintenance and ongoing support, increased rent/office space and an data analyst to fulfill numerous data reports-- not only for required deliverables to the Department of Health and Health Care Authority, but other programmatic and research contracts, and hospital community benefit program.

Workforce Assumptions:

See attached FNCal.

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic framework:

The mission, vision, and strategic plan of the WAPC align with the 2017-2019 Dept. of Health Goals for Improving Public Health. Furthermore, the WAPC actively engages in partnerships and collaborations to leverage knowledge and resources to provide high quality, safe, and cost efficient healthcare. WAPC services are free to all, promoting health equities, minimizing disparities, and focusing on population health in all ages. Importantly, the poison system allows for highly specialized toxicology care for demographic populations that are typically underserved or lack access to high quality health care, such as low-income, rural, non-English speaking, or older adults.

Performance outcomes:

N/A

Other Collateral Connections

Intergovernmental:

N/A

Stakeholder response:

- Citizens of Washington state
- Communities-at-large
- Washington State Department of Health
- Health Care Authority
- Public Health Districts' Leadership and Staff
- Emergency Medical Service Professionals
- Hospitals/healthcare facility's clinical staff (physicians, nurses, pharmacists)
- Hospital executive leadership
- City, County, State, and Federal Elected Officials
- Key Business, community, education and healthcare leaders
- Educational service district leadership and staff
- Academic institutions

- Numerous prevention coalitions

Legal or administrative mandates:

N/A

Changes from current law:

N/A

State workforce impacts:

N/A

State facilities impacts:

N/A

Puget Sound recovery:

N/A

Agency Questions

Did you include cost models and backup assumptions?

See attached FNCal

Reference Documents

- 1G-WAPC-FNCAL.xlsm

IT Addendum

Does this Decision Package include funding for any IT-related costs, including hardware, software, (including cloud-based services), contracts or IT staff?

No