

WASHINGTON -- The poison control center is the place to call after discovering that your toddler has been drinking from those containers under the sink.

The federal government would continue providing funds to the centers under legislation approved 405-10 by the House on Wednesday.

Rep. Lee Terry, R-Neb., co-authored the bill. He noted that Omaha has one of the oldest poison control centers in the country, established in 1957.

The majority of funding for Omaha's center is provided by the Nebraska Medical Center and the University of Nebraska Medical Center, Terry said.

It serves as the poison control center for Nebraska and also takes calls from Wyoming, American Samoa and the Federated States of Micronesia.

The 61 poison control centers across the country are staffed 24 hours a day. They responded to 4 million calls last year. People answering the phones are trained to assess poison risks, recommend treatment or refer callers to appropriate medical facilities.

In less serious cases, the centers can help callers avoid a costly trip to the emergency room. "This legislation not only saves lives, but saves millions of dollars a year in unnecessary costs," Terry said.

The \$230 million bill would authorize federal spending on national poison control efforts through 2014. It also would continue grant programs that fund education programs by the local centers.

The bill now goes to the Senate, where Terry said he expects it will be approved.

