

Ms. Perla Tabares Hantman, Chair

**SUBJECT: SCHOOL BOARD ENDORSEMENT OF NATIONAL POISON PREVENTION WEEK, MARCH 17-23, 2013**

**COMMITTEE: INNOVATION, EFFICIENCY AND GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS**

**LINK TO STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK: STUDENT, PARENT, AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

The National Poison Prevention Council has reported that over two-million poisonings are registered each year by the 57 poison control centers across the country. Almost 130,000 of the calls received involved children ages 6-19 who were experiencing a medication error. Statistics show that more than 90 percent of these poisonings occur in the home and can be prevented.

National Poison Prevention Week, designated by Congress as the third week in March each year, highlights the dangers of poisonings and how to prevent them. The initiative was established over five decades ago, with remarkable achievements in preventing deadly poisonings especially among young children. Data from the National Center for Health Statistics and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention show that during this timeframe the number of deadly poisonings of small children under the age of six has been reduced by nearly 90 percent. This public health success was achieved through education, implementing laws related to safe product packaging, creating the poison control center system, improving emergency response systems and treating child poisonings in the hospital setting.

The Florida Poison Information Center-Miami proudly serves the South Florida community, in partnership with Miami-Dade County Public Schools and the Miami-Dade County Injury Prevention Coalition, educating our students, parents, and grandparents about poison hazards in our environment. This year a need has been identified to heighten outreach and awareness efforts focusing on the dangers over-the-counter (OTC) medications. OTC medicines are drugs that can be bought without a prescription, and although deemed safe enough to be sold to the public, taking them incorrectly may pose serious health risks. OTC medications may interact with other medicines, supplements, foods or drinks. Some may cause problems for people with certain medical conditions. It is important to take medicines correctly, and be careful when giving them to children or allowing children to self-administer. In fact, statistics show that children begin to self-medicate by the age of 11. To bring awareness and help prevent poisonings at this early age, the American Association of Poison Control Centers, in partnership with Scholastic, Inc. and McNeil Consumer Healthcare, developed a sixth grade medicine safety curriculum. Lessons include key medication safety messages such as always ask an adult before taking OTC medications, how to use dosing devices, understanding Drug Facts Labels, and when to call a poison center. Hard copies of the school toolkit have been sent to poison centers as well as to every teacher in the Scholastic network. The full curriculum is available online for free at [www.scholastic.com/OTCLiteracy](http://www.scholastic.com/OTCLiteracy), for school nurses and teachers to use at their discretion.

The Florida Poison Information Center-Miami also wishes to remind the community to call the Poison Help Line at 1-800-222-1222 if you have concerns about a medication or side effect. Specialists are available to assess your medical situation immediately. The call is free and confidential.

**ACTION PROPOSED BY CHAIR**

**PERLA TABARES HANTMAN:** That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, endorse National Poison Prevention Week, March 17-23, 2013.