FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Safeguard Your Home, Safeguard Your Medication
Toddlers and Teens are Most At-Risk Children for Medicine Poisonings

Missoula, MT – The use of medicine in the United States has tripled in the last thirty years, according to Safe Kids Worldwide. Nearly 4 billion prescriptions were filled in 2014 with $84 million in over-the-counter medicine sales every day. Half of the 1.24 million calls to poison centers for children each year are due to medicine, the leading cause of child poisoning. A recent study by Safe Kids Worldwide reveals that teens are also at risk for unintentional medicine poisoning and the percent of children experiencing a serious outcome as the result of medicine poisoning is six time greater in children age 15-19 years than children age 1-4 years. In addition to the risk of medicine poisoning among children, medicine misuse and abuse is a concern for older children and teens. More than 5% of Montana children age 12-18 years report using a prescription drug for a non-medical purpose.

Safe Kids Missoula Coalition has partnered with Missoula Forum for Children and Youth to bring together a panel of experts to address medication safety at a Community Conversation on Wednesday, November 16, 2016 at 6:30 P.M. in the Gallagher Board Room at Community Medical Center. The panel will consist of a pharmacist, police detective and prevention expert who will present the risks associated with medication misuse and discuss how parents and caregivers can protect children from medicine poisoning.

“It’s important for everyone to save the Poison Help number in your phone, 1-800-222-1222,” said Kira Huck, Safe Kids Missoula. “This is a fast way to get an answer from an expert. In addition to saving the Poison Help number, it is even more important is to take a few precautions to prevent these emergencies from happening in the first place.”

Safe Kids Missoula and the Missoula Forum for Children and Youth encourage every family to take these important steps:

TOP TIPS FOR PARENTS/GRANDPARENTS/CAREGIVERS OF TODDLERS

• Put all medicine up and away and out of sight, including your own. Make sure that all medicine is stored out of reach and out of sight of children. Consider places where kids get into medicine, like in purses, counters and nightstands.

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Consider products you might not think about as medicine. Items such as diaper rash remedies, vitamins or eye drops are not often thought of as medicine, but they can be dangerous when not used properly and should be stored safely.

Use the dosing device that comes with the medicine. Proper dosing is important. Kitchen spoons are not proper measuring devices, and a teaspoon or tablespoon used for cooking will not measure the same amount as dosing devices provided with medicine.

Write clear instructions for caregivers about your child’s medicine. When other caregivers are giving your child medicine, write clear instructions about what medicine to give, when to give it and how much to give.

TOP TIPS FOR PARENTS/GRANDPARENTS/CAREGIVERS OF TEENS

Check in with your teens and talk about medicine they are taking regularly. Even teens who need to take medicine daily may make errors in dose or dosing frequency, so it is important to communicate with them regularly about taking medicine responsibly.

Teach your child how to read the over-the-counter drug facts or prescription label and the importance of following the directions. Be sure your teen knows that taking more than the recommended dose will not help them get relief any faster and it could hurt them.

Communicate to teens the importance of only taking medicine that is meant for them. Taking medicine that belongs to someone else or misusing medicines (even over-the-counter medicine) can cause harm.

EVERYONE

Save the toll-free Poison Help line number on your phone: 1-800-222-1222. You can also put the number on your refrigerator or another place in your home where babysitters and caregivers can see it. And remember, the Poison Help line is not just for emergencies, you can call with questions about how to take or give medicine, concerns about plants, chemicals, carbon monoxide, bites, stings and more.

To learn more about the Community Conversation event, contact the Foundation for Community Health, lead agency of Safe Kids Missoula at 406.926.2522 or the Missoula Forum for Children and Youth at 406.258.3020. For more medicine safety tips, visit SafeKids.org or choicesmattermissoula.org.

About Safe Kids Missoula
Safe Kids Missoula Coalition, a local partner of Safe Kids Worldwide, is led by Foundation for Community Health and includes safety experts from more than 30 nonprofit and government agencies dedicated to protecting kids from preventable injuries—the number one cause of death to children in the United States. The Coalition works together to increase awareness and create safer environments with the goal of preventing traffic injury, concussion, poisoning, child gun access and more. For more information, visit fchwmt.org/safe-kids-missoula.

About Missoula Forum for Children and Youth
The Missoula Forum for Children and Youth is an alliance of prevention workgroups united by a common mission: To lead collaborative, proactive community efforts to prevent underage substance use and to foster the development of healthy and resilient children and youth. Missoula Forum for Children and Youth utilizes a multi-faceted and evidenced based approach to help provide youth the greatest opportunities to make healthy choices. Learn more about the Missoula Forum for Children and Youth at missoulaforum.org.