

Suggested Checklist for Establishing a Safer Environment for Water Activities During a Summer Camp

Below are some general items for consideration in developing a safer environment for water activities during summer camps. This checklist is intended to begin the education process on water safety for clubs that sponsor summer camps, summer camp directors and those that manage lifeguard teams so that the risk of danger is minimized. This checklist is not exclusive and providing a safer environment depends on many factors, some of which will be unique to each club and summer camp and may not be provided for below. Therefore, it is important that each summer camp be reviewed or audited by a qualified person knowledgeable of the potential dangers and the applicable laws and requirements.

- Know and follow the safety requirements for Summer Camp water activities, camp counselors and lifeguard supervision, management, training and qualifications:
 - Established by your state and local laws
 - Established by the American Red Cross
- Review your state and local laws and the American Red Cross requirements at the beginning of every season for changes
- Make sure the pool or other water area complies with all state and local laws, including adequately marking the shallow and deep sections of the water area
- Hire only competent and qualified supervisors, managers, lifeguards and counselors
 - Do not prefer lesser qualified candidates that are club members or the children of club members over more qualified non-member related candidates
 - Ensure all certifications are current and will continue during the entire season. If certifications will expire during the season, be sure to calendar expiration dates so that you can follow-up before hand.
- Have onsite adult supervisors for both lifeguards and camp counselors that can command the respect and assert the control necessary to ensure all water safety rules are followed. While many laws define “adult” as 18 years of age, most teenagers do not have the maturity and discipline to consistently supervise peers and to respond in an emergency situation.
- Determine the ability of your campers to participate in water activities
 - Make sure campers are swim tested by qualified personnel and that the campers’ abilities are clearly marked with colored wrist bands, caps or shirts so that non-swimmers and different levels of swimming abilities are easily ascertained. DO NOT rely on a parent for rating their child’s swimming ability above a non-swimmer.

- Restrict campers to the areas commensurate with their abilities
- Require floatation devices for non-swimmers
- Prohibit potentially unsafe water activities or water activities that may hinder the lifeguard team's ability to conduct patron surveillance. For example, the following should be prohibited:
 - Prohibit the "deadman" float and underwater breath holding activities
 - Prohibit activities that involve the tossing or jumping of campers or counselors that could result in collisions or other injuries
 - Prohibit the throwing of objects that may cause injury to campers or counselors
 - Prohibit any activity that may hinder the lifeguard team's patron surveillance
- Have a written Emergency Action Plan and practice it
 - An EAP will ensure that your lifeguard team and summer camp counselors are prepared for emergencies
 - EAPs are written, detailed plans that set forth the roles and responsibilities of all responders during an emergency
 - This includes understanding, practicing, evaluating and updating your EAPs
- Train summer camp counselors on water safety and the dangers presented even by shallow water
 - Make sure camp counselors understand that drowning is usually a silent death without any flailing, thrashing or calls for help
 - Make sure that campers are assigned to particular camp counselors properly monitored while doing water activities
 - Make sure your camp counselors know the lifeguard team's rules and requirements
 - Show the locations of all emergency equipment, including emergency phones and AED devices
 - Conduct emergency drills and practice emergency response techniques including CPR
 - Coordinate emergency responsibilities and drills with the lifeguard team
 - Remember a large number of unqualified and untrained counselors do not make a water area a safe environment. If they do not know what to look for, they will not

be able to react until it is too late. Children have drowned in front of unqualified counselors for which the ratio was nearly 2 to 1.

- Provide continuing education of and drills for your lifeguard team throughout the season. This is a state and local law requirement and a recommendation of the American Red Cross. Remember the amount of training and drilling set forth in most laws is a MINIMUM and does not preclude additional training and drilling as necessary.
 - Make sure your lifeguards know the summer camp rules and requirements
 - Make sure that your lifeguards know the ability designations of campers and keep them restricted to the areas designated for their respective abilities
 - Conduct emergency drills and practice emergency response techniques including CPR
 - Show the locations of all emergency equipment, including emergency phones and AED devices
 - Coordinate emergency responsibilities and drills with the summer camp counselors
- Coordinate the activities of the lifeguard team and the summer camp and camp counselors
 - Have coordination meetings between the camp counselors and the lifeguard team so that they know each other and better understand the other's respective responsibilities and duties
 - Have the summer camp provide the water activities schedule to the lifeguard team, including the projected number of campers and counselors involved, so that the lifeguard team can ensure adequate staffing
 - Have a clear and defined chain of command
- Provide a sufficient number of lifeguards for patron surveillance of the water during summer camp activities. Remember counselors usually do not have the same type or depth of water safety training as lifeguards and are not considered substitutes for adequate lifeguard staffing by state and local laws.
 - Know the number of campers and counselors that will be involved and at what times during the day
 - Know the ages of the campers involved
 - Determine whether new or different blind spots may be created by the clustering of campers and their counselors. For example, if there will be many non-

swimmer campers in the pool, know whether that will cause clustering in certain areas and whether that will hinder surveillance of other parts of the water.

- Know the level of experience and ability of the members of your lifeguard team and make sure that each member's area of patron surveillance does not exceed the respective lifeguard's ability
- Do not set rigid pool user to lifeguard ratios. For example, a pool with a large number of small children presents many risks and may require more lifeguards. Also, do not assume that the same number of new and inexperienced lifeguards can provide the same level of patron surveillance as the same number of experienced lifeguards.