Swim Safety for Early Child Care and Education Programs

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Follow these water safety tips to help keep children safe. For more information on water safety visit Swimming & Water Safety | Vermont Department of Health. All regulated programs must follow Licensing Regulations. If you have questions, contact DCF CDD Licensing.

Contact AHS.VDHInjuryandViolencePreventionProgram@vermont.gov for more information about this flyer.

Water Safety



- Do not leave children alone near water, as even shallow water such as a bucket or puddle can be dangerous.
- If you cannot find a child, check the water first. Drowning can occur quickly and quietly.
- Train all staff in infant and child CPR and how to save children from drowning (5.10.5.4.1).
- Consider making a classroom swim safety plan to review with children in your care.

Protect Children (5.10.5)*



- Programs must have a fence around pools and around water close to the play area.
- Fences should be at least 4 feet tall with no more than 3.5 inches of space at the bottom of the fence.
- All fences should have gates that swing outward with self-closing and self-latching doors. Gates should be locked when the pool or water is not in use.
- Fences should be climb-proof, meaning children cannot climb it like a ladder.
- Lock and cover hot tubs when not in use and drain water from wading pools when not in use.

Test Swimmer Ability (5.10.5.4.8)*



- Knowing a child's swim skills helps you choose the right level of supervision and decide if a flotation device is needed.
- Test children's swimming ability before water activities in waist deep water. Those testing ability must hold a current Water Safety Instructor (WSI) certificate from the American Red Cross (ARC) or another approved agency.
- Non-swimmers must stay in areas less than waist deep unless participating in a learn to swim program or when there is a shallow water non-swimming area.

Always Watch Children (5.10.5.4)*



- Always watch children and follow staff/child ratios for water activities.
- Remember to do a head count every 15 minutes.
- Stay in the water with toddlers, and if you need to leave, take them with you

Know the Signs & How to Respond



- Signs of drowning include a head tipped back, mouth at water level, and eyes that look dull or closed.
- Other signs to look for include quiet gasps, fast breathing, hair over their face without the child trying to remove it, or a "climbing ladder" motion where the child appears almost vertical in the water.
- If you see a child unable to grab onto a pool wall, float, or face down. Help them right away by reaching for them or using a floatation device to help them get to safety.

Playing in Water



- Water toys are for play only. Remove all toys from the water when not in use so children are not tempted to go back into the water.
- Arm bands and water wings can slip off easily when children jump into the water and during playtime. This can be a drowning risk if a child is not a strong swimmer or cannot swim without a floatation device.

* More information in Licensing Regulations.