

## Important information about Drowning:

People can drown in lakes, oceans, swimming pools, whirlpools, bathtubs or showers. Wherever there is water, there is risk.

Near drowning can cause serious impairments and/or brain damage.

Be alert to these contributing factors:

- Inadequate supervision
- Seizure disorder
- Medical emergencies while in the water (heart attack/stroke)
- Use of alcohol or drugs
- Water conditions, including temperature and clarity; hidden objects

### **SUPERVISION SAVES LIVES**

### **DROWNING CAN OCCUR IN SECONDS**

### **BEFORE A SWIMMING/WATER SPORT ACTIVITY:**

- Assess each person's swimming abilities and the level of supervision needed
- Know each person's health care needs, behaviors and other conditions which may impact upon their safety in the water
- Make specific staff/individual supervision assignments; one to one supervision should be provided to people with seizure disorders and people who are not ambulatory
- Use U.S. Coast Guard-approved person floatation devices (PFD) for people who cannot swim, those who have seizure disorders and those who are not ambulatory. PFDs must be properly sized and maintained to be effective; however, they are not a substitute for supervision.
- Establish a system for ensuring that the whereabouts of all individuals is known. Visual contact must be maintained with all individuals in the water at all times.
- Alert lifeguards to the special needs of individuals; ask lifeguards if the swimming area poses any special risks.
- Before individuals enter the water, assess clarity and temperature of the water, weather conditions, and potential for overcrowding of the area. Provide supervision appropriate to the conditions found.
- Be responsive to and anticipate changing conditions.

## **IN THE WATER:**

- Staff cannot rely upon lifeguards to provide supervision.
- Staff who are responsible for individuals must be directly supervising the individuals and must be in the water with them.
- Staff must call for help at the first sign of trouble.
- Staff must maintain visual contact at all times with individuals for whom they are responsible.
- Supervision of individuals must not be interrupted by assigned staff to perform other duties, such as escorting individuals to the bathroom.
- Observe all rules of the swimming area.

## **BATHING:**

- Assess each person's needs for bathing supervision and assistance.
- Be aware of each person's health care needs which could impact upon their need for supervision when bathing.
- Individuals should never be left alone in the tub or shower if they require supervision when bathing.
- Staff should ensure that all bathing supplies are available in the bathroom before assisting an individual with bathing.
- Staff must be able to correctly operate all special tubs and bathing equipment.
- For people with seizure disorders, showering is safer than bathing.



**Office for People With  
Developmental Disabilities**

### **Statewide Committee on Incident Review (SCIR)**

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