

WATER SAFETY IN CHILD CARE FACILITIES



COMMUNITY CARE FACILITIES LICENSING PROGRAM

Drowning can happen very quickly and in only a few centimeters of water. An increasing number of children drown each year due to inadequate or inappropriate supervision of water related activities. **Child day care facilities are advised not to take groups of children to bodies of water such as pools, lakes, ponds, oceans, rivers or streams.** Water related activities have added risk which must be assessed, and appropriate safety precautions must be put in place to protect children from harm.

The following practices and precautions should be taken to protect the health and safety of children in child day care settings when water related activities are undertaken:

- Children must never be left unattended during water play related activities.
- Active supervision (direct and constant) must be maintained at all times:
 - Consider whether additional care providers, volunteers, parents are needed,
 - Always maintain visual contact and close proximity,
 - Continually scan the water play area, and
 - Listen and observe at all times.
- Ensure the water play area or activity is appropriate for the age, physical and developmental abilities of all the children in the group.
- Keep safety equipment and first aid supplies nearby at all times.
- Teach children about water safety.

If a swimming pool or hot tub is part of the facility environment, Licensee's must ensure appropriate preventative measures, such as fencing [appropriate height and non-climbable] and locks [including hot tub lids] are in place to reduce unsupervised access.

- If wading pools are used, empty them daily and store upside down to prevent water accumulation.
- The Licensee should have a written policy regarding any pool to ensure the health and safety of persons in care, which should address the following issues, if applicable:
 - Health considerations (pool water, sanitizing, etc.), maintenance of equipment, supervision (including preventing persons in care from accessing the pool without supervision), and physical safety.
 - If the Licensee/Applicant is intending to utilize a pool as part of play experiences, their policy should also include safety measures around usage [Staff to child ratios, supervision, age/developmental appropriateness, safety equipment available, etc.].

The use of this type of equipment requires careful and detailed consideration by Licensing on a case-by-case basis. It is important to recognize that there may be times when this type of equipment is not suitable, safe or in the best interest of children. Although the use of pools is not prohibited by the Child Care Licensing Regulation and the Director of Licensing Standard of Practice Safe Play Space [DOLSOP], it may pose additional risks to the health and safety of children. Some considerations include:

- Whether the equipment meets the needs of children;
- What additional types of risk are involved (for example, if a swimming pool or hot tub is part of the facility environment, how will you ensure appropriate preventative measure, such as appropriate fencing and locks are in place to reduce unsupervised accessibility?);
- Training of staff providing supervision [i.e. Life Saving or Lifeguard Training];
- What necessary steps will be needed to ensure adequate active supervision; and
- How will staff ensure the equipment is used and maintained properly?
- How they will ensure the health and safety of children in care, which addresses the following issues:
 - a) Health, disinfection, and physical safety; and
 - b) Preventing children accessing the pool without supervision.

OVER

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The policy will be reviewed and the Licensing Officer will inform the child care facility whether the policy meets the requirements of the Child Care Licensing Regulation, the DOLSOP Safe Play Space and the Water Safety Bulletin 2013.

Other water features in play areas:

- o On site: If the designated play area contains access to bodies of water, the Licensee should submit a plan regarding intended use of these areas. This plan should include a description of any these features, their location, security measures to prevent unsupervised access and any other steps taken to mitigate the risk of these water features. If the Licensee is intending to utilize these areas as part of outdoor play experiences, this plan should also include safety measures around usage [staff to child ratios, supervision, safety equipment available etc.].
- o Off site: If a Licensee is intending on utilizing an outdoor play area outside the property boundary on a regular basis as part of daily programming, the Licensee/Applicant must submit a written plan, as per Schedule B of the Child Care Licensing Regulation. This plan should include a description of any major physical features that may affect the safety of children, including bodies of water, located along the routes to, and in the immediate vicinity of, the outdoor play areas and steps taken to mitigate the risk of these water features. If the Licensee/Applicant is intending to utilize these water features as part of regular play experiences, this plan should also include safety measures around usage [staff to child ratios, supervision, safety equipment available etc.].

When creating a plan around these areas, Licensees may consider the following [depending on location, level of use and type of water feature being proposed]:

- o Additional Hazards in the area (i.e.: slippery rocks, fast flowing water, etc.);
- o Staff to child ratios;
- o Ages of the children in care;
- o Use of lifejackets or PFDs when in or near the water;
- o Any emergency procedures that are in place and practiced;
- o Whether appropriate emergency equipment is in place (i.e.: throwing ring with securely attached line, reaching pole – 12 ft. minimum, or rescue can);
- o Use of cellular phone or access to a telephone;
- o Recommendations made in the Water Safety Bulletin 2013;
- o Whether the equipment or area meets the needs of children;
- o What necessary steps will be needed to ensure adequate active supervision; and
- o How staff will ensure the equipment is used and maintained properly.

Field Trips:

- o When planning a field trip where there are water features, Licensee's should carefully consider the location and assess it for potential health and safety risks. A pre-trip to assess the area is recommended to ensure the area is age and developmentally appropriate for the children in your care, any hazards can be assessed prior to children attending and the Licensee can acquire proper equipment and develop safety protocols.
- o Licensees should adhere closely to the recommendations in the Water Safety Bulletin and DOLSOP at all times, including:
 - Having additional care providers where necessary.
 - Maintaining visual contact and close proximity.
 - Scanning the water area visually on a continuous basis.
 - Listening and observing the children at all times.
 - Ensuring that the area chosen is both age and developmentally appropriate for all children in care.
 - Keeping safety equipment and first aid supplies are in close proximity.
 - Teaching children about water safety.

Safety Bulletin

Water Safety 2013



To: All Child Day Care Facilities

Purpose: To protect the health and safety of children who attend child day care facilities. Drowning can happen very quickly and in only a few centimeters of water. An increasing number of children drown each year due to inadequate or inappropriate supervision of water related activities.

Child day care facilities are advised not to take groups of children to bodies of water such as pools, lakes, ponds, oceans, rivers or streams.

Water related activities have added risk which must be assessed, and appropriate safety precautions must be put in place to protect children from harm.

The following practices and precautions should be taken to protect the health and safety of children in child day care settings:

1. Children must never be left unattended during water play related activities.
2. Active supervision (direct and constant) must be maintained at all times:
 - Consider whether additional care providers, volunteers, parents are needed
 - Always maintain visual contact and close proximity
 - Continually scan the water play area
 - Listen and observe at all times
3. Ensure the water play area or activity is appropriate for the age, physical and developmental abilities of all the children in the group.
4. If wading pools are used, empty them daily and store upside down to prevent water accumulation.
5. Keep safety equipment and first aid supplies nearby at all times.
6. Teach children about water safety.
7. If a swimming pool or hot tub is part of the facility environment, ensure appropriate preventative measure, such as fencing and locks are in place to reduce unsupervised accessibility.

Note: Your local Health Authority Community Care Licensing Program may have additional water safety policies; please contact your local licensing officer.

This safety bulletin is issued by:

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