

Procedure No. : I.E. PR.001
Subject: Water Safety
Manual Section: Health and Safety

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A. PURPOSE

The purpose of this procedure is to establish a process for statewide consistency in the application of the water safety policy by providing safe aquatic activities, thereby, minimizing the risk of serious water related incidents.

B. APPLICABILITY

This procedure shall apply to all individuals supported by Department of Developmental Services operated, funded, and/or licensed/qualified programs involved in aquatic activities.

- 1 All public programs shall adhere to this procedure.
- 2 All DDS individual & family support programs shall adhere to this procedure.
- 3 All private agency programs/qualified providers shall adhere to this procedure.
- 4 All community training homes shall adhere to this procedure.
- 5 All individuals who self-direct supports funded by DDS shall adhere to this procedure.

This procedure shall apply to all staff responsible for aquatic activities in Department of Developmental Services regions and Southbury Training School.

C. DEFINITIONS

Activities Proximal to Water: Any activities, at any location, where there are bodies of water present at the intended destination that are open and accessible to individuals. This means there are no barriers in place to prevent access such as secure fencing and padlocked gates. This includes, but is not limited to, streams, creeks, oceans, lakes, ponds, pools, hot tubs, wading pools, or natural or man-made water areas.

Aquatic Activities: all water-related activities including swimming, boating, fishing, hot tubs, water parks and those activities proximal to water which include, but are not limited to picnics near water, feeding the ducks at a pond, unrestricted access to backyard wading (or swimming) pools, or walks on the beach..

Aquatic Activity Screening : a form that identifies an individual's desire and ability for presence and participation in aquatic activities and the minimum safe staff supervision ratios needed for such activities. This form is an addendum to an Individual Plan where it is valid for one year, or the Individual Short Plan, where it is valid for up to three years for individual's not enrolled in Medicaid. This form replaces the Water Safety Assessment.

Aquatic Activity Manual: a binder that shall be kept in a designated area at a day, residential, respite or work site that is easily accessed by staff. It shall contain copies of the DDS Water Safety Policy and Procedures, Water Safety Guidelines, copies of each individual's Aquatic Activity Screening, copies of Water Safety Checklists for individuals, Water Safety Plans, training records and materials for staff, and pool or hot tub protocols.

(DDS) Aquatic Director: A Department of Developmental Services employee designated by each region or training school to manage aquatic programs for public programs, individual & family support divisions and community training homes that are not affiliated with a private agency. The DDS aquatic director acts as a consultant to the (private) agency aquatic director.

Agency Aquatic Director: One person identified by a private agency to assume responsibility for DDS water safety policy and procedure implementation and training for all employees at various sites and program locations, including the agency's licensed community training home providers. Ensures, or appoints someone to ensure, that copies of each individual's DDS Aquatic Activity Screening are current and on file for all private sites and program locations. Acts as the agency liaison to the DDS aquatic director.

Certified Water Personnel: An individual who holds a current lifeguard card from the Red Cross, YMCA, or is a Connecticut State Park Lifeguard.

(DDS) Community Training Homes: Homes licensed by the State of CT DDS in which direct and sole oversight is by DDS. For Water Safety Policy and Procedure implementation, these homes and the providers shall be under the oversight of the DDS Aquatic Director or designee.

(Private Agency) Community Training Homes: Homes licensed by the State of CT DDS which have primary direct oversight from a private agency and secondary oversight by DDS. For water safety policy and procedure implementation, these homes and the providers shall be under the oversight of the Agency Aquatic Director as identified by the corresponding Private Agency.

Deep Water: water that is above the individual's chest when they are standing upright.

Hot Tub: a small, warm/hot water soaking pool, generally used for fitness, relaxation or therapy. Other names commonly used for this activity include "spa", "Jacuzzi" or "hot whirlpool". This does not include "bathtubs", "century tubs", or "therapy tubs" that are used for bathing or prescriptive therapies.

Individual: a person eligible for services from the Department of Developmental Services

Individual & Family Support Program: supports and services provided, operated or qualified by the Department of Developmental Services and given to individuals who reside at home with their families or in independent living arrangements. This can include, but is not limited to: in-home and community based respite services, leisure and recreational programs, individual and family support workers, clinical supports and services, respite centers and camps.

Lifejacket : a life preserver in the form of a sleeveless jacket or vest that is used to keep a person afloat in the water. It is usually made of buoyant material or light material filled with air.

Private Agency Programs: supports and services funded and/or licensed/qualified, in whole or in part, by the Department of Developmental Services and operated by the private sector. These can include, but are not limited to: residential and work settings including community training homes, day supports and services, respite centers, leisure and recreational programs, individual and family supports and services, and camps.

Public Program: supports and services provided, operated, or qualified by the Department of Developmental Services. These can include, but are not limited to: state-operated residential and work settings, respite centers, day programs, leisure and recreational programs, individual and family supports and services, and camps.

Special Conditions: a medical, physical, or emotional condition, which may create a potential life safety problem in the water.

Shallow Water: water that is at or below the individual's chest when they are standing upright.

Water Safety Checklist: a form required to be reviewed and completed with individuals who may participate independently in any type of aquatic activity.

Water Safety Plan: a form, indicating the specifics of a planned aquatic activity, which is required to be completed and approved in advance of any aquatic activity. This plan includes the date, start and end time, location and type of aquatic activity; as well as the individuals, their supervision needs and the staff's abilities to safely meet those needs

D. WATER SAFETY MANAGEMENT

The adherence to the content of this water safety procedure is mandated for all DDS operated, funded, and/or licensed/qualified programs involved in aquatic activities. All of the forms contained in the DDS Water Safety procedure shall be used without deviation in all programs and settings unless otherwise specified. Alternate procedures will not be accepted for use by the DDS.

1. DDS Aquatic Director

The Regional/Training School Director shall appoint an Aquatic Director, who will be responsible for establishing region specific aquatic protocols for people and programs that adhere to this policy/procedure and ensure that all aquatic activities are conducted in a safe manner.

The DDS Aquatic Director or their appointed designee(s) shall:

- a. Make resource information available (i.e. procedures, guidelines, handouts, etc.) to provide training to staff, assist in completing and using each Individual's Aquatic Activity Screening, Water Safety Plan, and increase safety awareness regarding aquatic activities.
- b. Assist in developing swimming pool or hot tub use protocols for all Public Program living arrangements and DDS Community Training Homes with a swimming pool or hot tub that has a depth of 12" or more.
- c. Annually review existing swimming pool or hot tub use protocols for all Public Program living arrangements and DDS Community Training Homes that have a pool or hot tub to determine if modifications are necessary. Protocols must be submitted annually to the DDS Aquatic Director by May 1st. The pool cannot be used until the protocol has been reviewed and approved.
- d. Assist, as requested, in developing site-specific safety protocols in Public Program and DDS Community Training Homes that may have open and accessible water sources other than a pool or hot tub on the property.
- e. Assist DDS Staff Development in preparing and presenting water safety training materials and curriculum as needed. Ensure staff review the DDS Water Safety Policy & Procedure, and each individual's Aquatic Activity Screening form specific to their home or program assignment. This shall be reviewed annually by staff between March 1st and May 1st. Completion shall be tracked via submission of an in-service training sheet that is signed by staff indicating training completion, and forwarded to the designated clerical staff in DDS Staff Development.
- f. Acts as a liaison to Private Agency Aquatic Directors providing direction and interpretation of DDS Water Safety Policy and Procedures. Provides consultative assistance.

2. Private Agency Aquatic Director

Each Private Agency shall appoint one individual to serve as their Agency Aquatic Director. This person shall serve as a liaison between the DDS Aquatic Director for all of their programs and

services.

The Agency Aquatic Director shall:

- a. Make resource information available (i.e. procedures, guidelines, handouts, etc.) to provide training to staff and assist them in using the Individual's Aquatic Activity Screening, the completion of Water Safety Plans and increase safety awareness regarding aquatic activities.
 - b. Assist staff in developing initial swimming pool or hot tub use protocols for all Private Program living arrangements and Private Agency Community Training Homes with a swimming pool or hot tub that has a depth of 12" or more.
 - c. Annually review existing swimming pool or hot tub use protocols for all Private Agency Program living arrangements and Private Agency Community Training Homes that have a pool or hot tub to determine if modifications are necessary. Protocols must be submitted annually to the Agency Aquatic Director by May 1st. The pool cannot be used until the protocol has been reviewed and approved.
 - d. Assist, as requested, in developing site-specific safety protocols in Private Agency Programs and Private Agency Community Training Homes that may have open and accessible water sources other than a pool or hot tub on the property.
 - e. Assist designated staff within the agency in preparing and disseminating water safety training materials as needed. Ensure staff review the DDS Water Safety Policy & Procedure, and each individual's Aquatic Activity Screening form specific to their home or program assignment. All training and material review shall occur annually by staff between March 1st and May 1st. Completion of training shall be documented on an in-service training form clearly outlining the information included in the training.
 - f. Ensure all Private Agency Programs and Private Agency Community Training Homes have Water Safety materials available to staff at each site in a central location and that documentation and training records are current in order to comply with individual site inspections conducted through DDS Quality Monitors and/or DDS Resource Managers.
 - g. Acts as a liaison for their Agency to the DDS Aquatic Director. Provides direction and interpretation of the DDS Water Safety Policy and Procedure and consults with the DDS Aquatic Director on issues as needed.
- 3. Community Training Homes**
- a. Private Agency Community Training Homes (CTH) and DDS Community Training Homes shall adhere to this procedure, but are not required to complete Water Safety Plans.
 - b. CTH Providers shall adhere to each individual's Aquatic Activity Screening and provide the minimum safe staffing requirements for all approved activities for each individual.
 - c. Between March 1st and May 1st of each year, each CTH Provider shall review the DDS Water Safety Policy & Procedure, the Water Safety Guidelines and review the Individual's Aquatic Activity Screening.
 - d. CTH Providers shall provide documentation to the Private Agency or DDS regarding completion of the annual training and review requirements.
 - e. CTH providers shall annually review the Water Safety Checklist with each individual who has a code level of #5 between March 1st and May 1st, and provide a signed copy to the individual's DDS Case Manager.

4. Staff Providing Supports in Individual or Family Homes

For the purposes of this procedure, staff providing supports in individual or family homes refers to anyone who is working in or out of the home in which the individual resides, who is mandated to follow this procedure as indicated in Section B - Applicability. This would include the following: DDS Public Program and IFS Staff, individuals who are employed by a qualified provider or a Private Agency contracted by DDS, or staff hired directly by the individual or family.

a. Staff Providing Supports in Individual or Family Homes Mandated to Follow Water Safety Procedure

The following individuals are all required to follow and implement the DDS Water Safety Policy and Procedure according to the Public, Individual & Family Support and Private Program mandates:

- 1 Staff who work for DDS and are providing an in-, or out-of-home service on paid state time
- 2 Individuals who works for a qualified provider or private agency who is contracted to work for the family with funding from DDS
- 3 All staff hired by the individual or family to provide DDS funded self-direct supports
- 4 Works for a school district, town or similar, and is being paid by that source, but is participating in a state-owned and/or operated program as a support person for that individual (i.e. Camp Quinebaug, Camp Harkness)

b. Staff Providing Supports in Individual or Family Homes NOT Mandated to Follow Water Safety Procedure

Provided their services were not implemented with/at DDS funded or operated programs, the following individuals would not be required to follow DDS Water Safety Policy and Procedure:

- 1 Nurses aides or nurses hired through a home health agency,
- 2 An employee of the child's school district or another school district,
- 3 An employee who is working for the family independent of DDS funding.

5. Supplemental Protocols

Private agencies may have protocols for their agency that exceed the minimum standards set forth in the DDS policy and procedure. They do not replace the DDS Water Safety Policy and Procedure, but can be a supplement to their staff training and the implementation of the requirements.

Separate protocols must be written for all sites that have a pool or hot tub that meets requirements.

- a. Supplemental protocols cannot impact the use of the forms mandated in the DDS Water Safety Procedure for all aquatic activities.
- b. All protocols that supplement the DDS Policy and Procedure shall be approved by the DDS Aquatic Director prior to implementation.
- c. Specific protocols for pools and hot tubs must be approved by the Agency or DDS Aquatic Director.
- d. The DDS Aquatic Director will assist the Agency Aquatic Director, as requested, with the initial development of any protocols needed for their sites.

E. SAFETY PLANNING REQUIREMENTS

Appropriate planning for aquatic activities can significantly reduce the chance of serious water related incidents. The identification of an individual's safe supervision needs and the training and awareness of staff contributes to safe aquatic activities. The DDS Water Safety Procedure provides mandates for supervision level identification at all aquatic activities, aquatic activity screenings for all individuals, water safety plans for all aquatic activities implemented by staff, and a water safety checklist to enhance and refresh an individual's awareness of safety precautions when participating in aquatic activities independently.

1. General Safety & Supervision Requirements

- a.** An Approved Water Safety Plan must be in place prior to implementing any type of aquatic activity. Staff shall refer to the supervision levels on each person's Aquatic Activity Screening. Water Safety Plans are not required for Public or Private Community Training Homes or for individuals who self-direct supports.
- b.** For those individuals requiring supervision during aquatic activities, staff must be proximal to the individuals at all times and supervising at all times.
- c.** If staff are in a 1:1 ratio compliment with an individual at a swimming activity, they must be in the water with the individual unless otherwise specified in the individual's aquatic activity screening.
- d.** When staff support individuals to participate in activities that are proximal to water, 1:1 staff shall position themselves between the individual and the water source, or must be by the individual's side within arms length, unless otherwise specified in the individual's aquatic activity screening.
- e.** When individuals are to be participating in multiple aquatic activities on the same outing, staff shall assure that individuals receive the required level of supervision for each aquatic activity as indicated in their DDS Aquatic Activity Screening.
- f.** Prior to responding to an emergency involving an individual, the person in charge shall assure that all other individuals in his or her care are safe, and identify who will supervise those individuals.
- g.** If an individual is showing signs of struggle in the water, staff should always offer a reaching device such as a life jacket, a rescue tube, a reaching pole or a towel to assist them prior to offering an outstretched arm.
- h.** For those individuals who participate independently in aquatic activities, staff shall review the Water Safety Checklist with them each year between March 1st and May 1st. Review of the checklist reinforces safety tips and cautions to be applied at aquatic activities when staff are not present.

2. DDS Aquatic Activity Screening Form

The purpose of the Aquatic Activity Screening form is to have accurate information on each individual regarding their abilities and safety needs when participating in aquatic activities. The individual's ability to participate should be consistent for residential, day or other programs. The individual's aquatic activity screening shall be dictated solely by the individual's needs, abilities and desires, not by the program or agency's ability to meet them.

An individual may be listed as able to participate in certain activities on their Aquatic Activity Screening, but this does not constitute approval of an activity. This can only be permitted through submission and approval of a Water Safety Plan.

- a. The Aquatic Activity Screening form shall be completed annually at the time of the annual Individual Plan or at the time that the Individual Short Plan is completed.
- b. This form is an addendum to the plan and is to be used as a tool for staff to plan and implement appropriate and safe aquatic activities for the individuals they serve. It shall be referred to each time a Water Safety Plan is to be filled out to ensure that appropriate recommended individual to staff ratios are being utilized for aquatic activities.
- c. Aquatic Activity Screening Codes

Every individual for whom this procedure is applicable, shall have an Aquatic Activity Screening form filled out and an aquatic code assigned to them each time an Individual Plan (IP) or IP Short Plan is completed. The planning and support team shall complete the screening accurately reflecting the individual's activities and supervision needs.

Under no circumstances shall an individual be given a code of "0" if they are able to participate in activities, for the convenience of those who provide services. There should be a clear and concise reason for a "0" code circled on the aquatic activity screening form.

- **Code "0":** If an individual is given a code of "0" this would mean that the individual does not participate in swimming or any aquatic activities of any kind (which includes visiting parks, feeding the ducks, etc. where water may be proximal). An individual given this code will require team planning and permission by the DDS or Agency Aquatic Director to change the code at a later date to an active level of 1 through 6.
- **Code "1":** This code would be given to an individual who participates in *Proximal To Water Activities Only* and they must be with staff. An individual with this code does not intend to have any contact with water for wading or swimming, etc.
- **Code "2":** This code would be given to an individual who has no swimming skills, that may participate in some of the other listed aquatic activities including activities which may be proximal to water. An individual with this code may or may not be approved to swim. The individual demonstrates a lack of ability or inconsistencies in following directives from staff.
- **Code "3":** This code would be given to an individual who has little to no swimming skills, that may participate in some of the other listed aquatic activities including activities which may be proximal to water. An individual with this code may or may not be approved to swim. The individual demonstrates the ability to consistently follow directives from staff.
- **Code "4":** This code would be given for an individual that has the ability to swim in shallow and deep water, but needs supervision from staff while swimming. The reasons for the supervision should be indicated. For example, if the supervision is solely for medical reasons, that should be reflected on the screening form.
- **Code "5":** This code would be given for an individual that has the ability to swim in shallow and deep water and can do so without staff present. The individual also is required to review the Water Safety Checklist with their staff annually between March 1st and May 1st to review safe participation recommendations for all aquatic activities.

- **Code “6”:** If an individual is given an aquatic activity code of “6” this means that the individual permissions are not known and need to be identified. The individual shall be a 1:1 for all aquatic activities until they have been given a proper aquatic activity code at which time the DDS Aquatic Activity Screening form shall be presented to the individual’s team and modified as appropriate.
- d. Following the completion of the DDS Aquatic Activity Screening form as part of the individual’s Individual Plan or Individual Short Plan, the DDS Case Manager or designee shall ensure that copies of it are forwarded to all sites in which the individual participates including Public, Private or IFS Programs. These programs can include, but are not limited to day and residential programs, worksites, individual and family support programs, camps or respite centers. A copy shall remain in the DDS Case Manager’s Master File in the Individual Plan section of the file.
 - e. Any discrepancies in an Individual’s Aquatic Activity Screening form shall be rectified through a team process and consultation as needed with the DDS Aquatic Director or Agency Aquatic Director.

3. **Assigning Individual to Staff Supervision Ratios**

The individual to staff ratio for each aquatic activity that an individual may participate in must be listed on the DDS Aquatic Activity Screening form. Criteria to determine these ratios include, but are not limited to, the following:

- 1 Ability of the individual
- 2 Experience and comfort level of staff
- 3 Availability of certified water personnel
- 4 Proximity to emergency services
- 5 Location, conditions, and seasonal hazards

- 1 Under no circumstances shall the staff to individual ratio exceed 1 staff to 10 individuals at any aquatic activity at any time.
 - 2 If individuals are being given ratios such as 6:2 (instead of a ratio of 3:1), this implies that there must be 2 staff to accompany the individuals. If this is not the case, the ratio of 3:1 shall be used, not 6:2. There may, of course, be exceptions to this that may need clarification to the DDS or Agency Aquatic Director.
- a. **Activities Proximal to Water:** If staff are in 1:1 ratio compliment with an individual, and are planning on attending a non-swimming aquatic activity where there is no lifeguard on duty (i.e. evening walk on the beach), the ability of the staff and individual shall be considered. If the individual has no swim ability and does not respond to redirection if heading toward the water, the staff shall have, at a minimum, competent swim ability. If there are no staff who meet this requirement to accompany the individual, an alternate activity should be planned at a safer site where there are no unsecured bodies of water.
 - b. **Ocean, Lake or Pond:** A certified lifeguard must be on duty at the location, or included with the group, to swim at any ocean, lake or pond. If there is no lifeguard, none of the individuals shall swim.
 - c. **Swimming Pools and Hot Tubs:** Supervision needs for the individual must be identified on the screening form. For community facilities, there must be a designated lifeguard on duty to swim if that facility normally requires it during regular operational hours.
 - 1 For swim sites where there is no lifeguard on duty (i.e. group homes, condominium complexes, etc..) there should be a protocol for use of the pool approved by the DDS Aquatic

Director or the Agency Aquatic Director. The restriction on all protocols is that they are intended to be in effect only for the individuals that reside at the location of the pool and their on duty staff or approved volunteers.

- 2 For Public and Private CLA's that have their own pool, the following applies:
 1. There must be a current protocol in place for those individuals that reside at the location.
 2. The protocol shall also apply to those individuals who are assigned as permanent staff at the site and those who are working extra hours at the site that normally work in other locations.
 3. The protocol must state that NO NON-RESIDENTS, or staff not working at the home, shall swim in the pool unless there is a lifeguard on duty and there has been prior approval from the DDS or Agency Aquatic Director.
- 3 For pools at pre-planned vacation locations or hotels (or similar), staff should ensure that there is a protocol planned in conjunction with the Water Safety Plan that will ensure the safety of all individuals involved. This must be approved by the DDS or Agency Aquatic Director or designee.

4. DDS Water Safety Plan

The Water Safety Plan is a form that shall be filled out whenever staff are planning for individuals to participate in any type of aquatic activity. All Aquatic Activities shall be requested through submission of a Water Safety Plan and shall be approved by a supervisor or charge of the site prior to the activity.

- a. A Water Safety Plan shall be completed by staff and presented for approval to an immediate supervisor or shift charge prior to implementation of the aquatic activity. Staff must cross reference each individual's Aquatic Activity Screening form to ensure that their Water Safety Plan is meeting the minimum safe supervision needs of each individual and that the abilities of staff safely meet these needs.
- b. If the Water Safety Plan includes multiple aquatic activities on the same outing, the individual to staff ratio for the individual shall be listed as the one that provides the highest level of supervision. For example, if you were going boating and swimming and the individual has a 3:1 individual to staff ratio for boating and a 2:1 ratio for swimming, the ratio needed for the outing for that individual would be 2:1.
- c. One Water Safety Plan may be submitted for an identical activity (i.e. weekly swim lessons) that is reoccurring, provided the information is identical from one week to the next and all planned dates are on the original form. Identical is defined as same individuals, same staff, same location and same time.
- d. When approving a Water Safety Plan, the charge or supervisor doing so shall be referring to the DDS Aquatic Activity Screening to ensure that the Water Safety Plan corresponds to the Aquatic Activity Screening(s). This means that the individual is able to participate in the aquatic activity and that the individual to staff ratio is being provided through the Plan. If the ratios on a Plan do not correspond to the individual's need, the Plan shall not be approved without modifications.
- e. It is imperative that all staff and volunteers attending the aquatic activity are listed in the appropriate section on the Water Safety Plan. This enables the person responsible for reviewing and approving the aquatic activity to see who will be responsible for the individual's supervision and to determine if the appropriate individual to staff ratios are being met.

- f. Approval of a Water Safety Plan is at the discretion of the individual required to approve it. Factors to be taken into consideration include, but are not limited to: the location the individuals are going to, the safety and supervision needs of the individuals planning to attend and the training and skills of the staff planning to accompany the individuals. Even if adequate staffing levels are to be provided, the person who is responsible for approving the Plan may decide that they feel such an outing may not be appropriate or that the Plan is not a safe activity for the individuals planning to attend.
- g. Once the Water Safety Plan has been reviewed it shall be given back to the individual who submitted it to let them know of its status. It is intended to stay at the site of the program location and does not require the approval or review by the DDS or Agency Aquatic Director. Completed and implemented Water Safety Plans will be kept on file in the program's Aquatic Activity Manual.

5. DDS Water Safety Checklist

For those individuals who participate independently in aquatic activities (or those who have the potential to do so), staff shall review the Water Safety Checklist with identified individuals on an annual basis. This is essential for those who have less than 24 hour supervision in residential, day or work settings. The original form should be sent to the individual's Case Manager and a copy should be filed in the corresponding Aquatic Activity Manual

- a. The Water Safety Checklist is only filled out for individuals who have a Code 5 on the DDS Aquatic Activity Screening. The checklist does not take the place of the DDS Aquatic Activity Screening, it supplements it if individuals access activities independent of staff.
- b. This document shall be reviewed with any individual who accesses, or may have access to any type of aquatic activity independent of the staff hired to work with them.
- c. This checklist is designed to increase the individual's awareness about accessing aquatic activities in a safe manner and it serves as a record that such information has been discussed with the individual each year prior to the high aquatic activity season..
- d. Support staff shall review this information with the individual about participating in aquatic activities safely on an annual basis between March 1st and May 1st.
- e. After the form has been reviewed and signed by the individual and their staff, they shall retain a copy for the individual's program file and a copy shall be sent to the DDS Case Manager. Additional copies should be sent to other programs in which the individual participates.

F. ACTIVITY REQUIREMENTS

1. **Activities Proximal to Water**

- a. The individual's Aquatic Activity Screening shall include activities proximal to water as an authorized activity and shall include the individual to staff ratio required to provide appropriate supervision for the individual.
- b. Activities proximal to water refers to those activities which involve the potential to be close to bodies of water that are not secure by barriers and fences and are accessible to individuals (i.e. feeding the ducks at a pond, visits to local parks where ponds or streams may be present, etc.
- c. Activities proximal to water shall be approved for each occurrence through the submission and approval of a Water Safety Plan. A Water Safety Plan shall be approved prior to participation in the activity. A Water Safety Plan is not required to be completed

for DDS and Private Agency Community Training Homes.

- d. Staff may support individuals to participate in activities proximal to water with an individual-to-staff ratio that adheres to or exceeds the current Aquatic Activity Screening code for each individual.
- e. When participating in activities proximal to water, staff shall take necessary precautions to minimize accident potential in and around the water based on each individual's swim abilities and the land and water conditions.

2. Swimming

- a. The individual's aquatic activity screening form shall include swimming as an approved activity and shall include the individual to staff ratio required to provide appropriate supervision for the individual.
- b. A Water Safety Plan shall be approved prior to participation in the activity. A Water Safety Plan is not required to be completed for DDS and Private Agency Community Training Homes.
- c. Responsible staff shall be familiar with the location in which they intend to bring individuals to swim or at a minimum shall do up front research of the location to determine if it is appropriate for the individual participants.
- d. There must be the designated number of lifeguards on duty at each beach, lake, pond or pool as specified by that local, state or private facility.
- e. Staff may support individuals to participate in swimming activities with an individual-to-staff ratio that adheres to or exceeds the ratio identified in the current Aquatic Activity Screening for each individual.
- f. Staff shall always direct individuals to swim in the area directly in front of the lifeguard when possible.
- g. Staff shall not allow individuals to swim in unsupervised areas of the lake, pond, ocean or pool.

3. Boating

- a. The individual's aquatic activity screening form shall include boating as an authorized activity and shall include the individual to staff ratio required to provide appropriate supervision for the individual.
- b. Staff may support individuals to participate in boating activities with an individual-to-staff ratio that adheres to or exceeds the ratio identified in the current Aquatic Activity Screening for each individual.
- c. Boating shall be approved for each occurrence through the submission and approval of a Water Safety Plan. A Water Safety Plan shall be approved prior to participation in the activity. A Water Safety Plan is not required to be completed for DDS and Private Agency Community Training Homes.
- d. Each individual and the staff person or volunteer who is assisting him or her shall wear a lifejacket on all motorized (inboard and outboard boats) and non-motorized (i.e. rowboat,

canoe, sailboat, etc.) small crafts.

- e. In adherence to the Connecticut Boater's Guide, individuals and their staff or volunteers do not need to wear life jackets on commercial boats (i.e. cruise boats, ferry, scenic, chartered boats which do not require life jackets to be worn). Staff shall be aware of the location of the life jackets on the boat. Supervision of individuals shall be conducted as indicated in their Water Safety Screening.

4. Shore Fishing

- a. The individual's aquatic activity screening shall include shore fishing as an authorized activity and shall include the individual to staff ratio required to provide appropriate supervision for the individual.
- b. Shore fishing shall be approved for each occurrence through the submission and approval of a Water Safety Plan. A Water Safety Plan shall be approved prior to participation in the activity. A Water Safety Plan is not required to be completed for DDS and Private Agency Community Training Homes.
- c. Staff may support individuals to participate in shore fishing with an individual-to-staff ratio that adheres to or exceeds the current Aquatic Activity Screening code for each individual.
- d. When fishing from shores or banks, staff shall take necessary precautions to minimize accident potential in and around the water based on each individual's swim abilities and the land and water conditions.

4. Hot Tubs

Individuals must have a written Doctor's order from their primary physician to use a hot tub. This information shall be written on the Kardex if one is available. If there is no written Doctor's order, the individual may not use the hot tub. Individuals using a hot tub must be under the direct supervision of staff. Supervising staff must:

- a. Ensure that the individual's aquatic activity screening shall include hot tub use as an approved activity and shall include the individual to staff ratio required to provide appropriate supervision for the individual.
- b. Support individuals to participate in use of a hot tub with an individual-to-staff ratio that adheres to or exceeds the ratio identified in the current Aquatic Activity Screening for each individual.
- c. Ensure Hot Tub use is approved for each occurrence through the submission and approval of a Water Safety Plan. A Water Safety Plan shall be approved prior to participation in the activity. A Water Safety Plan is not required to be completed for DDS and Private Agency Community Training Homes.
- d. Check the hot tub to assure that it is working properly and the water is not too hot or too cold.
- e. Watch the individual's reaction to determine if the person is enjoying the hot tub experience and react accordingly.
- f. Monitor the length of time the individual is in the hot tub. Connecticut does not have an established time limit for hot tub use. However, individuals shall spend no more than 20 minutes in the hot tub at any one session.

5. Ice Skating – Frozen Ponds & Lakes

- a. Ensure that the individual's aquatic activity screening shall include ice skating as an approved activity and shall include the individual to staff ratio required to provide appropriate supervision for the individual.
- b. Ensure that they are ice skating at a place that is designated for ice skating and deemed safe through municipality for skating. This is normally done through posted signs.

G. NOTIFICATION AND DOCUMENTATION OF AQUATIC INCIDENTS

- a. Any incidents during aquatic activities shall be documented on the DDS Incident report form # 255. A copy of this incident report shall be sent to the DDS Aquatic Director.
- b. Any incident that involves an individual who has been submerged under water resulting in the need for physical assistance and requires resuscitation shall adhere to the following:
 1. Staff are to call 911 for ambulance transport to the nearest hospital.
 2. The immediate supervisor of staff who are supporting the individual in the aquatic activity shall be notified immediately of the incident. If this person is not available to receive the call, a message shall be left and the next person in the line of supervision shall be contacted. The chain of command must be followed until the reporting person speaks with someone directly.
 3. In all incidents involving an individual who has shown signs of distress or has been submerged and requires resuscitation, the supervisor who was notified shall immediately notify their Program Manager, or if after normal business hours, the DDS Manager on Call.

E. References

1. Connecticut General Statute Sec. 17a-238
2. [DDS Water Safety Policy - I.E.PO.001](#)
3. DDS Aquatic Activity Screening
4. [Water Safety Plan](#)
5. DMR Health Bulletin #98-1, Health & Safety: Summer Activities (07-02-98)
6. Boating and Fishing- State Regulations: Current Annual Connecticut Boater's Guide
7. Personal Floatation Device (PFD's): Current Annual Connecticut Boater's Guide
8. [DDS Water Safety Precautions Guidelines](#)
9. DDS Incident Report Form # 255
10. Encyclopedia of Aquatic Codes & Standards, volume 1; Copyright 1999, National Recreation and Parks Association, p. 88
11. [Water Safety Checklist](#)

F. Attachments

Attachment A: IP Addendum: Aquatic Activity Screening
Attachment B: Water Safety Plan
Attachment C: DDS Water Safety Precautions Guidelines
Attachment D: Water Safety Checklist

