THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT / THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK / ALBANY, NY 12234

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To: District Superintendents of BOCES
Superintendents of Public School Districts
Principals of Public Schools

From: Gemma C. Rinefierd, Ed.D.

Subject: Water Safety Information

A new law, Education Law section 926 becomes effective July 1, 2026, and requires school districts to provide information on water safety to parents/guardians.

Specifically, the law requires school districts to provide information at the beginning of the 2026-2027 school year to parents/guardians, either electronically or via written materials, regarding the following:

- drowning prevention,
- water safety, and
- safe and healthy swimming.

After the beginning of the 2026-2027 school year, the information is to be provided to parents/guardian of any new enrollees, or to the student if aged 18 or older.

Additionally, the school district must provide this information on the district's website in a visible location. Translation of the information into one of the 12 most commonly non-English languages in the state must be provided if requested by the parent/guardian.

The NYS Department of Health has created a tip card for this purpose: Safe Swimming Tips for Everyone.

Schools may also order copies of the Safe Swimming tip card (publication number 3112) at the Order Free Center for Environmental Health Publications.

Safe Swimming

Tips for Everyone

- Always swim with someone else and keep an eye on each other.
- Pay extra attention to your children around water.
- Consider your health. Medical conditions like a seizure disorder or heart condition can put people at greater risk of drowning.
- Avoid water that is greater than chest deep if you can't swim.
- Don't use alcohol or drugs if you plan to swim.
- Don't dive into water less than eight feet deep or of unknown depth.
- Pay attention to the weather and never swim during storms or lightning.
- The safest place to swim is at a public beach or at a pool with lifeguards.

Know the Signs of Drowning

Each year, hundreds of New Yorkers drown. It can happen to anyone, anywhere there is water. Drowning occurs quickly and silently. Someone drowning may appear to be splashing or waving when they are struggling to stay afloat.

Reduce your risk. Learn basic swimming skills. Consider taking a CPR class. Rescue breathing, first aid, and calling 911 could save a life.

Keep Kids Safe

Kids and teens have the greatest risk of drowning. Always keep little ones within arm's reach, even in the shallow end.

Lifeguards and life jackets don't take the place of close adult supervision. Make sure your pool has a secure enclosure that makes it inaccessible to children.

Stay Healthy

Germs can spread through water. Avoid getting sick by not swallowing water, and rinsing off before and after you swim. Never swim in cloudy or discolored water.

Stay out of the water if you are sick with diarrhea, or if you have open cuts or wounds. Don't pee or poop in the water. Take children on frequent bathroom breaks.

When Boating

Always follow safe boating practices and wear a U.S. Coast Guard-approved (Hll label) life jacket. Air-filled swimming aids, like water wings and floats, should never be used.

More Information

www.health.ny.gov/SwimSafe

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