

Children's Camps Buddy/Board Systems

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Swimming Assessments

- **Assessment of swimming abilities for each camper (also recommended for staff)**
 - **Determined by a progressive swim instructor (PSI)**
 - **Conducted annually and as appropriate**
 - **Campers considered non-swimmers until determined otherwise by PSI**
- **Minimum of two bather classifications:**
 - **Non-swimmer and swimmer**

• *See DOH Fact Sheet titled Progressive Swimming Instructor for NYS Children's Camps for approved PSI certifications*

• *Annual assessments are needed - camper's swimming abilities may change from year to year due to injuries and/or changes in fitness or physical abilities.*

• *Reassessment needed to advance to the next level.*

• *Assessment should be appropriate for the type of facility (i.e., pool, lake).*

Swimming Assessments

- **Assessment criteria is not specified in Subpart 7-2**
- **ARC Camp Aquatic Director Training Module suggested criteria for “Swimmers”:**
 - **Ability to swim 50 yards using a minimum of two strokes**
 - **Change direction while swimming include prone & supine positions**
 - **Ability to follow directions of lifeguards**

No standard/code required assessment criteria. Based on their training, a PSI uses swimming criteria for instruction, which does not necessarily correspond to “Swimmer” and “Non-swimmer” categories.

Assessment criteria and categories must be specified in the safety plan and identify which level is equivalent to a non-swimmer.

The ARC Camp Aquatic Training Module is no longer available. It was developed in 2001 in a collaborative effort between the American Red Cross (ARC), the NYSDOH and the camping industry. The training was offered to children’s camp operators and aquatic staff to provided supplemental information, which was not contained in the ARC Lifeguarding or other aquatic courses. As part of the module, the above swimming assessment criteria was presented and may still be used.

- Start assessments in shallow water.

Other suggested criteria could be:

- *Pool Swimming Ability Classification Test - ARC WSI Level 4*
- *Open Water Swimming Ability Classification Test - Level 5 The reason for the increase in skill competency demonstration is that in lakes campers may need to swim greater distance than in a pool to reach a dock or other area to rest and water clarity issues may exist.*

Swimming Assessments

Non-swimmer restricted to water less than chest deep, except:

**during approved DOH learn-to-swim programs
when counselors directly supervise a maximum of three
non-swimmers in shallow water in the non-swimmer area.**

- *See DOH Fact Sheet for approved learn-to-swim programs*
- *Other learn-to-swim programs may be used by camps, but non-swimmers must be restricted to water less than chest deep.*
- *Although the code allows non-swimmers in water beyond chest deep when counselors directly supervise a maximum of three non-swimmers ... it is not a recommended practice and should be avoided when possible because it relies on the attentiveness of a counselor.*
- *Swim cribs are recommended or non-surf beaches (because of “zero depth entry”) should be used for small children.*

- **Rationale for non-swimmer water depth restriction:**
 - Bathers become buoyant in water chest deep and above, which causes them to lose contact with the bottom
 - Non-swimmers who lose contact with the bottom may not have the ability to prevent themselves from entering deeper water

Non-swimmers in greater than chest deep water has been identified as a contributing factor in all non-swimmer drownings since 1988.

Camp Trip Swimming Assessments

- **Conducting swimming assessments when the camp does not have an onsite aquatics program or PSI staff:**
 - **Use the facility's PSI (prior arrangement)**
 - **Borrow PSI from another camp**
 - **No assessment needed if campers will be restricted to water less than chest deep**
- **Consideration should be given to re-assessing campers when the on-site facility differs from off-site facility (i.e. pool vs. surf beach).**

The camp remains responsible for swimming assessments and must establish the criteria used to assess swimming abilities and ensure that the facility's PSI meets 7-2 requirements.

Skills for deep water swimming may differ based on the type of facility.

Swimming Areas

- **Designate areas**
 - **Float lines**
 - **Staff positioning**
 - **Separate pools**
 - **Docks**

Some camps establish the non-swimmer area based on the height of the shortest non-swimmer.

Float lines may be repositioned to restrict the shortest camper to less than chest deep water.

Staff may be positioned in the water to restrict campers from entering greater than chest deep water. Must provide enough staff so campers do not enter other areas.

Separate pools can designate non-swimmers and swimmer areas.

- **Non-swimmer less than chest deep**
- **Natural bodies of water may have depth fluctuations**
- **Surf beach and wave pool (not appropriate for non-swimmers)**
- **At aquatic amusement parks, identify water depth for each attraction and prohibit use by non-swimmers accordingly**
- **Some pools may be too deep for shortest non-swimmer**

Camps must establish and train staff on procedures for restricting non-swimmers to water less than chest deep. We have too often seen safety plans that state “non-swimmers will be restricted to water less than chest deep” but the plan does not indicate how it will be accomplished. Bathers generally are not continuously vertical in the water which makes a visual system not effective.

The water depth in natural bodies of water may fluctuate due to heavy rains, so camps may need to adjust area limits that are established by floats or docks.

Camp trips and Municipal Pool/Beach

Best to have an area separate from the guarded public assigned to the camp. Limit area of facility used by camp to an area that staff can effectively control - position staff in the water to restrict campers to one area of the pool/beach

Visual Identification

- **Non-swimmers shall be conspicuously identified to be readily distinguishable from swimmers except where:**
 - **non-swimmers are restricted from entering the swimmer area by a physical barrier such as a swim crib or dock (float lines are not physical barriers), or**
 - **are in a separate pool only for non-swimmers ■**

Visual identification of non-swimmers allows counselors and lifeguards to more easily identify campers who are not in the appropriate area.

- **Common identifiers-**
 - **Wrist band, bathing caps, zinc oxide, T-shirts**
- **Identify the swimmers or both swimmers and non-swimmers**
- **Identification method may need to vary for camp trip swimming**
 - **State Parks do not allow T-shirts to be worn in the water**

Use different visual identifiers for non-swimmers and swimmers or identify swimmers only. If only non-swimmers are visually identified they can remove the identifier and enter the swimmer area unnoticed.

Public pool/beach - have all campers wear visual identifiers at public facilities so they can be easily distinguished from the public.

Buddy System

- **Assign each bather to a buddy**
 - **Pair campers with the same swimming ability**
 - **If a non-swimmer is paired with a swimmer, both must remain in the non-swimmer area**
- **One threesome is allowed per swim area**

Rationale:

The “buddy system” provides each camper with a partner to summon help in case of an emergency. Provides each camper with a personal “lifeguard”.

“Threesomes” dilute the concept of the “buddy system”.

Buddies must be instructed to:

Notify lifeguards/counselors when their partner is in distress or missing
Stay in close proximity to their buddy

May need to allow for some separation during instructional swim when campers are demonstrating swimming strokes.

Aquatic amusement park water slide

- **Counselor positioned at beginning and end (exit pool) of slide**
- **Campers stay in pairs in line; first camper down slide waits for buddy to exit ride and reports to counselor waiting at exit**
- **Counselor accounts for buddies as they exit ride**
- **Campers move as a group to the next attraction**

Apply concept to other activities which only allow one individual on at a time.

Buddies must stay together in lazy rivers and similar rides.

Board System (or equivalent accountability system)

- **System for accounting for bathers**
- **Frequently either a stationary board or handheld “clip board”**
- **Board system identifies each bather by:**
 - **full name**
 - **bather’s swimming ability**
 - **area the bather is assigned to**
- **Should identify buddy pairs and triples**

- **A method of recording entry and exit from the pool/beach areas including:**
 - **Swimming areas**
 - **Pool/beach enclosure**
- **System must be in place to account for campers not intending to swim or needing to use the bathroom**
 - **Boy Scouts require campers that are not swimming to leave the bathing enclosure**

Areas with large pool/beach enclosures or no enclosures must specify how campers will be supervised and accounted for to ensure they do not enter the water without checking into the buddy/board system.

Swimmers may move between areas but must move with their buddy and notify the staff member maintaining the “board”.

Buddy/Board System

Used during all swimming activities

Can be modified for instructional swimming activities

Alternative system must be used for campers who are unable to comprehend or implement the buddy/board system

Multiple pools in one enclosure

Include non-campers in the buddy/board system

When campers cannot comprehend or implement the buddy/board system an alternative system should be used, such as counselors accounting for campers.

When there are multiple pools in one enclosure it may be necessary to use a separate buddy board for each pool depending on the number, size and distance between the pools. Campers must be checked in and out of each area within the pool and each pool.

It is a good idea to include staff, staff family members and visitors using the pool in the buddy/board system to set an example for campers and avoid confusion.

Camp Trip Accountability Systems

- **System does not need to account for the entire camp when groups will separate, such as at an aquatic theme park**
- **Types of accountability devices used**
 - **Clipboard (use for small groups)**
 - **Pocket charts**
 - **Tongue Depressors (Wilderness swimming)**
- **Campers and public swimming together**

Each group's counselor can account for the campers in their charge using a "clip board system".

Types of accountability device - examples provided in the next 3 slides.

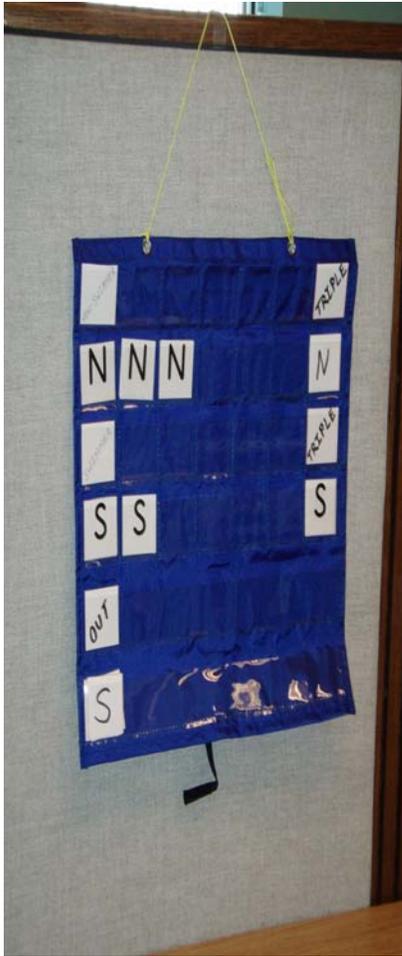
Camper and public swimming together- Visually identify all campers from the public. Limit the area of the facility used by the camp. Station counselors in the water to delineate area.



In this example campers' full names and swimming ability (indicated with an I for intermediate or D for deep water) are placed on plastic inserts. The camp also marked the tabs with an M to identify campers with medical conditions. The camper's specific medical condition is listed on the back of the tab.

Plastic tabs can easily be removed and placed in appropriate sections.

The "board" folds in half for easy transport.

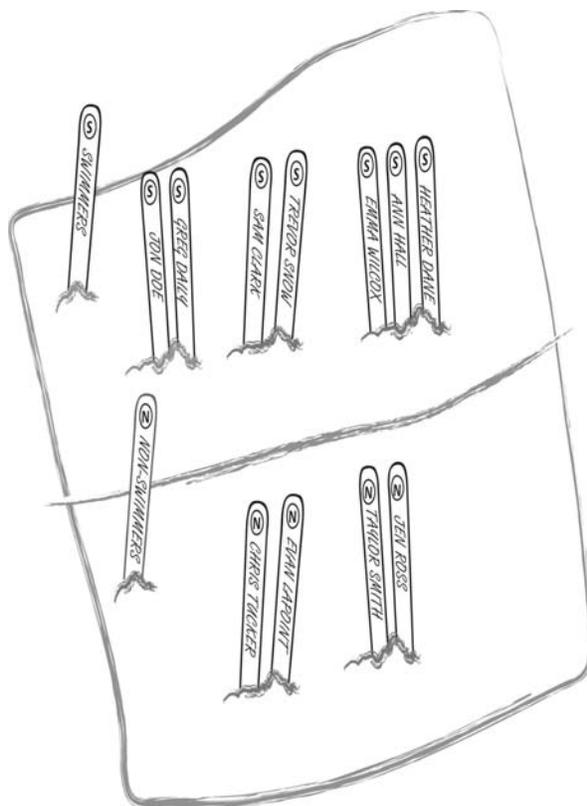


“Pocket chart” - Can be purchased from educational supply store/website. For the purposes of demonstrating this system we did not include individuals full name, only designated them as swimmers or non-swimmers. In the camp setting the camper’s full name and swimming ability must be indicated on the card.

The “pocket folder” can be hung on a fence or other nearby structure.

Rolls up for easy transport.

Tongue Depressor System- Wilderness Swimming



Tongue depressor system description: Prior to the trip, each camper's full name and assessed swimming ability is written (with permanent marker) on a tongue depressor to be used in a similar way as a buddy tag. At the site, an area on the ground near the beach is selected to serve as the "buddy board" and non-swimmer and swimmer areas are scratched or scraped into the soil or outlined with sticks on the ground. Each camper's tongue depressor is stuck into the ground next to his/her buddy's and in the assigned swimming area. When buddy pairs change swimming areas or exit the water, their tongue depressors are relocated to the new area or removed from the ground.

Clothespins can be used in a similar fashion on a rope strung between two trees.

Buddy Checks

- **Buddy checks of bathers must be conducted at least every 15 minutes.**
- **Checks must be referenced against the accounting system.**
- **Buddy checks, on average, should take no more than 60 seconds.**
- *Staff should count the number of buddy pairs in each section and verify the count with the staff maintaining the board/accounting system. If the count does not match, count pairs again if the count still does not match initiate the lost swimmer plan.*
- *Buddy checks that take longer than 60 to conduct may be an indication that the camp is not routinely implementing or not understanding the mechanics of the system.*
- *Subpart 7-2 does not mandate bathers exit the water to conduct buddy checks. Exiting the water may add to the time to implement.*

Camp Trip - Buddy Checks

- **Signal must not interfere with facility lifeguards**
 - **Flags**
 - **Hand signals**
 - **Facility may agree to signal buddy checks**
- *Arrangements with the off-site facility prior to the trip must include agreement on the signal used to initiate buddy checks.*
- *When multiple camps are using the same off-site swimming facility it is a good idea to see if the facility can assist with signaling buddy checks.*

Public Health Hazards

- **Subpart 7-2.1(b)(2)(xvi): failure to establish and enforce the Buddy System and Board System or other method generally accepted as providing a similar or equivalent level of bather safety during swim periods**
- **Subpart 7-2.1(b)(2)(xviii): failure to restrict non-swimmers to water less than chest deep except as allowed under Subdivision 7-2.11(a)**
- **Subpart 7-2.1(b)(2)(xxvii) failure to implement the camp safety plan resulting in a child not being protected from any unreasonable risk to his or her safety**

Non-swimmers in greater than chest deep water has been identified as a contributing factor in all non-swimmer drownings since 1988.

- **Subpart 7-2.1(b)(2)(xxvii) failure to implement the camp safety plan resulting in a child not being protected from any unreasonable risk to his or her safety**

Written Safety Plan

- **The camp safety plan is an operational and risk management manual.**
- **Risk management is the organized and planned effort of staff to prevent the loss of money, assets or human value due to events or circumstances that can be controlled.**

We are concerned with the protection of the campers but other reasons are critical to the camp operators.

Purpose:

- **To provide for the safety of campers and staff**
- **System to identify, evaluate, reduce, prevent or control loss (injury, illness, death)**
- **Ensure consistent policies from year to year**

The safety plan allows for consistence from year to year and for new staff to implement approved procedures.

Safety Plan Requirements: Job Descriptions

- **Specify minimum qualifications, duties and responsibilities of waterfront staff.**
 - **Aquatic Director**
 - **Progressive Swimming Instructor (PSI)**
 - **Lifeguards**
 - **Counselors**
 - **Trip Leader**
- **Specify ratios**

Required Staff

Aquatic Director

- *Supervise camp waterfront*
- *Establish & define swim areas*
- *Establish & define bather supervision*
- *Liaison with Camp Health Director regarding medical conditions which may place campers at greater risk during swimming activities*
- *Maintain overall safety & equipment standards*

Progressive Swimming Instructor (PSI)

Lifeguards

- *17 years of age, except:
 - 20% of the required total may be 16 years of age*
 - 18 years of age for wilderness swimming**
- *Preventive lifeguarding (surveillance & scanning)*
- *Lifeguards are not be engaged in duties or activities which distract them from the direct supervision of the waterfront*

Counselors: must be assigned to supervise campers. Their duties must be appropriate to their level of training and not include “lifeguarding” responsibilities.

Safety Plan Requirements: Staff Positioning

- **Describe/sketch lifeguard positioning for general swimming, instruction and other swimming activities**
- **Describe/sketch the area each guard is responsible for supervising**
- **Specify if guard is in an elevated chair or roving**
- **Describe counselor positioning**

Lifeguard and staff positioning

- *Pool/Beach shape*
- *Patron decorum (behavior/conduct)*
- *Patron age*
- *Developmentally disabled patrons*
- *Diving board use*
- *Instructional activities*
- *Multiple guards -make sure all areas are covered*
- *Lifeguards should be in elevated lifeguard chairs*
- *Lifeguards must not be distracted with instructional responsibilities*

Counselors must be actively supervising campers

Safety Plan Requirements: Swimming Assessments

Specify how, when and by whom camper swimming ability will be assessed.

- Identify swimmer classifications
(i.e. swimmer, non-swimmer)**
- Provide criteria for each classification**
- Identify water depth restriction for each classification**

Safety Plan Requirements: Swimming Area

- Describe the method used to restrict non-swimmers to water less than chest deep.**
 - Counselors positioned in the water**
 - Float lines**
 - Separate pools (shallow water)**
- Specify how non-swimmers will be visually identified.**

Safety Plan Requirements: Buddy/Board System

- Describe the “board” system that will be used. Include:
 - Overview of system use
 - Description of who will be included (bathers, others in enclosure on deck/beach, etc.)
 - “Buddy tag” details
- Pairing of buddies (limit triples)
- Identify who will maintain the accounting system

Safety Plan Requirements: Buddy Checks

- Specify “buddy check” procedures including:
 - Frequency
 - Signal
 - Buddy checks referenced against accounting system
 - Instructions given to campers

Frequency - at least once every fifteen minutes

Signal - must be different from other communications used at the waterfront.

Instructions

- *move together,*
- *grasp each other’s hands and raise them above their heads*
- *wait for signal to return to swimming*

Safety Plan Requirements:

- **Communication signals**
- **Rules & regulations**
- **Health screening**
- **Safety & first aid equipment**
 - **Proper placement**
- **Chemical handling**
- **Thunderstorm policy (prohibit swimming at least ½ hour after last thunder is heard)**

- *Thunderstorm policy holds true for indoor pools.*
- *Swimming Restrictions. Aquatic Director should check with the Health Director for any conditions which may put campers at greater risk or restrict them from swimming.*

Lightning current can enter a building via the electric, telephone wiring and incoming plumbing pipelines. This condition makes locker-room shower areas and swimming pools (indoor and outdoor) unsafe during thunderstorms because of the possible contact with current carrying conduction. While bonding and grounding may provide protection, participants should still evacuate the pool area to ensure safety.

Safety Plan Requirements:

- **Epileptic seizure policy**
- **Diving safety**
 - **Prohibit from deck/dock in water less than 8 ft.**
 - **Diving boards**
- **Deck slide safety**
- **Swimming pool capacity**
- **Adequate lighting (night swimming)**

Deck slide safety

- *one at a time*
- *feet first, forward sitting position*

- **Lost bather plan**
 - **Signal for implementation**
 - **Land & water search**
 - **Camper supervision**
 - **Notification of parents/officials**
- **Staff training**
- **Camper orientation**

Address what will be done with campers while search is being conducted.

Camper orientation - prior to participating in any swimming activity, campers must be instructed in the Buddy and Board Systems including:

The requirement to stay in close proximity of their buddy and notify staff when the buddy is missing or in distress;

The method of how to check in and out of the swim area.

The need if their buddy leaves the water for any reason, than they too must also exit the water.

The need for non-swimmers to stay in the designated area.

Additional Safety Plan Requirements for Camp Trip Swimming

- **Specific plan for each trip location**
- **Describe aquatic amusement park attractions**
- **Describe parental permission statement**
- **Describe/include pre-arrangements and agreements with the facility**
- **Lifeguard and other staff duties and responsibilities**
- **Buddy/accounting systems**
- **Staff safety plan review 24 hrs prior to trip**

• *Except for wilderness sites, only bathing facilities in NYS that have a valid permit to operate (issued from the LHD having jurisdiction) or bathing facilities operated by a NYS Agency may be used.*

• *Residential pool use is prohibited*

• *One generic plan for all trip locations is not adequate*

• *Include a copy of parental permission statement in safety plan*

• *Aquatic amusement park attractions - knowledge of facility and all attractions, which will be used. Identify water depths for each ride prior to trip, so non-swimmers can be restricted as appropriate.*

• *If facility provides lifeguard, camp's lifeguard role is to implement safety plan.*

Safety Plan Requirements: Wilderness Swimming

Additional requirements for wilderness swimming:

- **Site assessment**
- **Safety rules**
- **Staff swimming assessments**
- **Safety equipment**

Swimming assessments should be conducted prior to the trip.

See DOH wilderness swimming site assessment document.

Safety Plan Requirements: DD Campers

Additional requirement for camps with 20% or more developmentally disabled campers including:

- **Increased counselor to camper ratios**
- **Parent or guardian's written permission to participate in swimming activities**
- **Procedure for handling seizures and choking on ingested water**
- **Drills using procedures conducted within two weeks of the camp's operation and at two week intervals during the camp's operation**

Requirements should be applied to all camps with DD Campers even if the 20% threshold is not met.

Swimming Safety Plan Overview

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Description of waterfront personnel• Assessment of bather swimming abilities• Water depth restrictions for bather swimming abilities• Description of the visual identification on non-swimmers• Bather facility capacity• Description of Lifeguard positioning, ratios of Lifeguards to bathers, and designated supervision areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Other staff ratios & responsibilities• Description of the minimum required safety & first aid equipment & proper positioning of equipment• Description of communication signals• Epileptic seizure policy• Diving and deck slide safety• Rules & Regulations• Lost Bather Plan
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• *Supplemental checklists - draft form. Provides more space for comments and standardizes review.*

• *Safety Plan Review Frequency - must indicate annually one of the following:*

- *Complete plan review*
- *Partial plan review*
- *Up to date affirmation*

• *Should review DOH 367 each year for any new activities.*

• *Children's Camps Written Camp Safety Plan Guide book is available, but in limited supply.*