

For Immediate Release
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May is Childhood Drowning Prevention Month: Illinois DCFS releases PSA reminding parents to watch children in or near water

CHICAGO – Memorial Day marks the unofficial beginning of summer, and as the country begins to reopen following the COVID-19 pandemic, families will once again be heading to beaches, lakes and backyard pool parties to beat the heat. Illinois DCFS is releasing a new public service announcement to remind parents of the importance of constantly supervising their children when they are in or near water.

In 2020, 17 Illinois children lost their lives to accidental drowning: nine in pools, four in rivers, two in lakes, one in a pond and one in a cistern. Eight of the children who drowned in pools were age five and younger. Drowning is the leading cause of unintentional death for children ages one to four and second leading cause of unintentional death for children ages five to 15 according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

“The yelling, splashing and waving we see in the movies isn’t the way drownings happen in real life,” said Illinois DCFS Acting Director Marc D. Smith. “In reality, a child can drown in seconds, and in silence. While we will be able to enjoy a summer swimming or boating with friends and family again, we must not let our guard down when it comes to the safety of our children. We can prevent the tragedy of childhood drowning by actively watching our children any time they are in or around water.”

To listen to the PSA, click here: www.illinois.gov/iisradiopsa

Follow these safety tips to help protect children from water-related tragedy:

Bathrooms

- Never leave a young child alone in a bathtub or rely on a bathtub seat for safety.
- Secure the toilet lid. Curious toddlers could tip headfirst into a toilet, risking drowning.
- Don’t allow children to play alone in the bathroom.

Buckets

- Five-gallon buckets commonly used for household home-improvement projects pose a threat to babies and toddlers who may topple into them and be unable to get out.
- Empty and store all buckets out of children's reach when not in use.

Portable or Inflatable pools

- Don't be lulled into a false sense of security because of the shallowness of baby pools. A child can drown in as little as one inch of water.
- Empty the pool right after use and store it upside-down.

Swimming pools and hot tubs

- Keep ladders, patio furniture and toys away from above-ground pools. Toddlers are better climbers than you think!
- Install a four-sided fence with a self-closing, self-latching gate around all pools and spas. Always check to make sure the gate is locked or closed when leaving the pool or spa!
- Keep the pool and deck clear of floats, balls and toys after you leave the pool
- Young children should wear personal flotation devices, but they do not replace adult supervision.
- Keep hot tubs securely covered when not in use. Children should not be left in a hot tub alone.
- Appoint an adult who can swim to watch children at all times when they are in the pool.
- Learn CPR and keep rescue equipment, phone and emergency numbers by the pool. The American Red Cross offers [online CPR training classes](#) anyone can take at their own pace from the convenience of home.

Ponds, fountains and retention ponds

- Be aware of access to water hazards in your yard and neighborhood. If a child goes missing, check these areas first!

For more information and water safety resources, including posters, brochures and a coloring book for children, visit the DCFS website at www2.illinois.gov/DCFS and click on Safe Kids > Health and Safety Tips for Children > Water Safety.

About the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Founded in 1964, DCFS is responsible for protecting children from abuse or neglect by responding to calls received on the Child Abuse Hotline, 1-800-25-ABUSE (1-800-252-2873). With the goal of keeping children safe, DCFS strengthens and supports families with a wide range of services. When keeping a child safe means removing them from the home, DCFS makes every effort to reunite them with their family. When the best interest of the child makes this impossible, DCFS is committed to pursuing adoption by loving families to provide children with a safe and permanent home. DCFS is also responsible for licensing and monitoring of all Illinois child welfare agencies.