

Pat Quinn  
Governor



Richard H. Calica  
Director

## Illinois Department of Children & Family Services

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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### **DCFS URGES PARENTS TO PREVENT CHILDHOOD DROWNINGS** *Drowning leading cause of unintentional deaths for toddlers and preschoolers*

(SPRINGFIELD) As summer approaches, the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) is reminding all parents and caregivers to constantly supervise children when they are near water. Drowning is the leading cause of unintentional deaths for children ages one through four in the U.S., claiming the lives of 21 Illinois children last year.

“It doesn't matter who you are or how many safety precautions were set in place beforehand. When a child is unsupervised, these tragedies happen in moments,” said Richard H. Calica, Director of DCFS. “Stepping away to answer the phone, turning your back for a second or becoming distracted by other kids is a gamble with a child’s life.”

Inadequate supervision, which includes childhood drowning, was the third-leading cause of all child deaths indicated by DCFS last year. 21 Illinois children drowned in 2012: 10 in pools, six in lakes, two in ponds, two in rivers and one in a bathtub. A baby or toddler can drown in one inch of water in as little as 20 seconds, and children are at risk anywhere water collects: bathtubs, toilets, baby pools, decorative garden ponds, ditches, streams and septic tanks. Five-gallon buckets, commonly used in home improvement projects, pose a special risk for toddlers. Toddlers have undeveloped upper body muscles and can topple over headfirst into a bucket, drowning in as little as one inch of water.

According to the Center for Disease Control, for every child that drowns, five more are victims of near-drowning that require emergency medical care. The resulting injuries often require hospitalization and cause long-term brain damage that can include: memory loss, learning disabilities, and permanent loss of basic functioning that results in a permanent vegetative state.

(more)

Governor Quinn has proclaimed this month “Childhood Drowning Prevention Month” as part of a year-round statewide effort to educate parents and other caregivers about the importance of constant adult supervision when children are near water. The “Get Water Wise...Supervise!” campaign is backed by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, Prevent Child Abuse Illinois (PCA Illinois), the American Red Cross Illinois Capital Area Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics, the Illinois Department of Public Health (DPH) and other community partners.

“All childhood drowning is preventable,” said Roy Harley, Executive Director of PCA Illinois. “Adults are responsible for the safety and well being of their children, they must stay alert at all times when children are near water.”

For more information about child water safety or to request “Get Water Wise...Supervise!” materials for parents and other caregivers, please call Andy Martinez at 312-814-6847, email [Andrew.Martinez@Illinois.gov](mailto:Andrew.Martinez@Illinois.gov) or visit [DCFS.illinois.gov](http://DCFS.illinois.gov).

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**About Illinois Department of Children and Family Services.** Founded in the 1960’s, DCFS has the primary responsibility of protecting children and strengthening families through the investigation and intervention of suspected child abuse or neglect by parents and other caregivers. Over the last four years, DCFS received more than one million calls to our Child Abuse Hotline, offering and coordinating services wherever needed to help children remain in their homes safely. In instances where children must be removed from the home for their safety and well-being, DCFS makes every effort to return them safely to their homes as quickly as possible. When that simply is not possible, DCFS is equally committed to pursuing adoption by loving families to provide children with the permanent, safe, and nurturing homes they need and deserve to reach their fullest potential. As part of its duties, DCFS licenses and monitors all Illinois child welfare agencies and more than 14,000 day care centers, homes, group homes and day care agencies in the state.

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