



American Red Cross
Training Services

August 13, 2021

Sarah Chaires, Family Nurse Practitioner
Carolina Swims Foundation

Dear Ms. Chaires:

The American Red Cross strongly supports legislation that requires qualified lifeguards at public pools. This legislation should follow the recommendations for qualified lifeguards as outlined in the Model Aquatic Health Code, including that lifeguards be certified by a national training agency, such as the American Red Cross, and that their training include hazard identification and injury prevention, in-water response and resuscitation skills. The critical skills are taught and evaluated in person by qualified Lifeguarding instructors of the training agency.

Drowning is a leading cause of death in the United States. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, annually, an average of 3,536 people die from unintentional drownings (non-boating related) annually in the United States—about ten deaths per day. About one in five people who die from drowning are children 14 and younger. For every child who dies from drowning, another five receive emergency department care for nonfatal submersion injuries.

Further CDC data shows that more than 50% of drowning victims treated in emergency departments require hospitalization or transfer for further care (compared with a hospitalization rate of about 6% for all unintentional injuries). These nonfatal drowning injuries can cause severe brain damage that may result in long-term disabilities such as memory problems, learning disabilities, and permanent loss of basic functioning.

Tremendous progress has been made in drowning prevention in the past 20 years. Many risk factors related to drowning have been identified but only five active interventions have been studied and shown to be associated with a decreased risk of drowning. They include:

1. Providing four-sided fencing around swimming pools.
2. Training lifeguards to supervise swimming areas.
3. Using life jackets
4. Actively supervising swimmers.
5. Providing swimming lessons especially for children and non-swimmers.

The Red Cross created the Circle of Drowning Prevention to promote the concept that each of these primary prevention interventions are important, that they must all be present, all should surround the person at risk for drowning to provide the most layers of protection, and that any break in the circle makes a person vulnerable to risk of drowning. A critical link in the Circle of Drowning Prevention “Always swim in a lifeguarded area.” The Chain of Drowning Survival illustrates that

actions that must be taken when a rescue and response is required – the actions that lifeguards are trained to perform.

The role of lifeguards at an aquatic facility is two-fold: to prevent incidents from happening and to recognize, rescue and resuscitate a victim in the event of an emergency.

Studies suggest that more than 95% of swimmers rescued by a lifeguard do not require transport for further medical attention, suggesting that most lifeguard rescues occur in a timely manner preventing serious hypoxic injury and need for further care (Harada, Goto, & Nathanson, 2011). While studies report drowning deaths do occur despite lifeguard supervision, the risk of drowning is very low when in a lifeguarded setting (Pelletier & Gilchrist, 2011; United States Lifesaving Association, 2010; Harada et al., 2011).

The American Red Cross has been training and certifying lifeguards since the early 1900s. Our curriculum is best on the latest and best emergency science. Through Red Cross training, over 300,000 lifeguards are certified each year by Lifeguarding instructors throughout the United States.

The Red Cross, as well as other national training agencies, can help support the requirements to build staffing capacity of aquatic venues. Our training system is well-defined, transparent and available nationally for basic-level lifeguards, lifeguard managers, Lifeguarding instructors and instructor trainers. Agencies with aquatic facilities, including parks and recreation departments, colleges and universities, YMCAs, YWCAs, Jewish Community Centers, Boys & Girls Clubs as well as service organizations, such as the Boy Scouts of America, can become licensed training providers of the Red Cross Lifeguarding Program at no cost. Once a licensed training provider, a nominal fee (about \$40) is paid to the Red Cross for each Lifeguarding/First Aid/CPR/AED certification. This system allows for aquatic organizations to develop the capacity to train and certify lifeguards internally.

This issue is important to the Red Cross, but it is also important to me professionally and personally. I am currently the chair of the Aquatics sub-council of the Red Cross Scientific Advisory Council, and a faculty member within the Indiana University School of Public Health-Bloomington with drowning prevention as main focus of my research. I look forward to providing support to this effort as it proceeds.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William D. Ramos". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

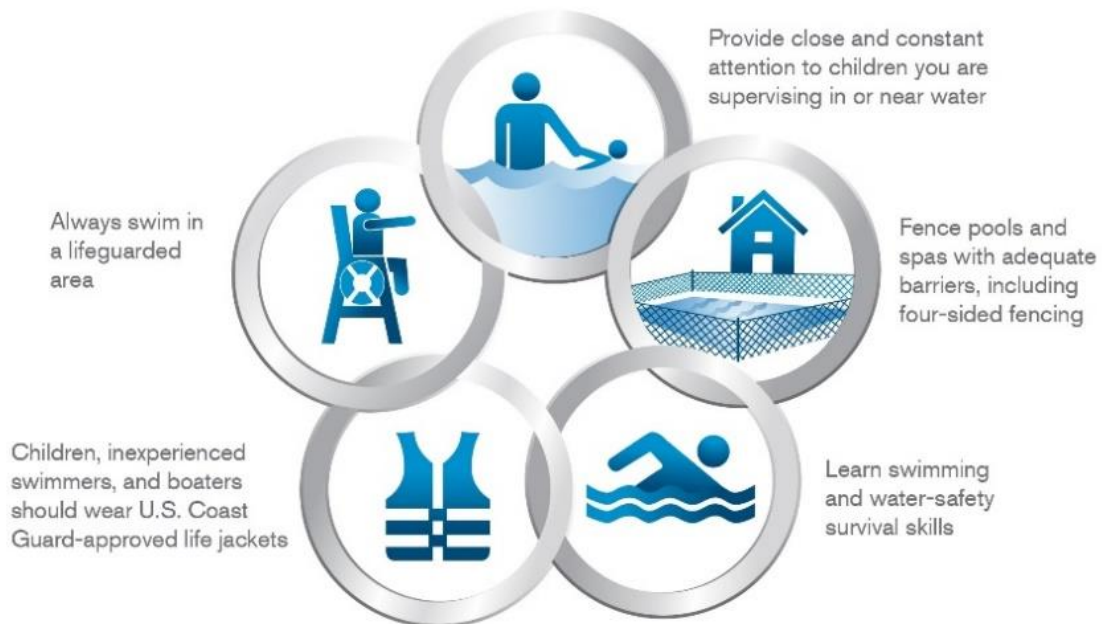
Dr. William D. Ramos
Scientific Advisory Council, Aquatics Sub-council Chair
American Red Cross

Attachments:

American Red Cross Circle of Drowning Prevention
American Red Cross Chain of Drowning Survival

Circle of Drowning Prevention

Layers of protection are essential to help prevent drowning.
Plan ahead for aquatic activities:



American Red Cross

Chain of Drowning Survival

A person who is drowning has the greatest chance of survival
if these steps are followed:



Recognize the signs of someone in trouble and shout for help

Rescue and remove the person from the water (without putting yourself in danger)

Ask someone to call emergency medical services (EMS). If alone, give 2 minutes of care, then call EMS.

Begin rescue breathing and CPR

Use an AED if available and transfer care to advanced life support



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