

SUPERVISION AT OFF-SITE BATHING FACILITIES USED
BY CHILDREN'S CAMPS
(Updated January 1996)

Introduction

In accordance with the requirements of Subpart 7-2 of the State Sanitary Code (SSC), the following guidance is provided for children's camps to follow when camps use off-site bathing facilities or aquatic theme (amusement) parks. The guidance describes circumstances where, because the off-site facility supplies lifeguard supervision, the children's camp does not need to bring lifeguards to the facility. The guidance also describes specific circumstances where a conventional buddy system is not required.

The children's camp operator remains responsible for supervising campers at all times, including at off-site bathing facilities. **The off-site facility lifeguard is not a substitute for supervision responsibilities of the camp's staff. Close supervision of campers by counselors is vitally important.**

Policy Guidance

- If campers will be in the water, the camp operator remains responsible for assuring each camper's swimming ability was assessed by a progressive swimming instructor (see current fact sheet) and that non-swimmers are visually identified while in the water.
- **Swimming Pool or Bathing Beach** - If a children's camp uses a swimming pool or bathing beach and the bathing facility provides lifeguards, the children's camp is not responsible for lifeguarding, but must provide one trained aquatic staff (see definitions) for each 75 campers to conduct or assist in proper implementation of the buddy system and for coordination of on-site supervision in the water. Pre-arrangements with the facility will determine any additional duties of the camp's trained aquatic staff.
- **Aquatic Theme (Amusement) Park** - If an aquatic theme (amusement) park activity allows: 1) only one or two patrons to use the activity at a time, or patrons are in a raft or boat to participate; and 2) the activity water depths do not exceed chest deep for non-swimmers; the children's camp does not need to provide trained aquatic staff supervision, and the requirement to perform buddy checks is waived for those activities only. **(Close supervision by camp counselors continues to be important.)**
- If the aquatic theme park activity allows large numbers of patrons to participate in the water at one time, or the water depth can fluctuate (i.e., wave pool), or the water depth exceeds chest deep on participating non-swimmers, then campers must be restricted to swimming areas appropriate to their assessed swimming ability, and the camp must provide one trained aquatic staff (lifeguard or water safety instructor or equivalent) for every 75 campers and conduct buddy checks at least every 15 minutes.
- **No Lifeguards Provided** - If the children's camp uses an off-site bathing facility where lifeguards are not provided, the children's camp must provide 1 lifeguard for every 25 bathers and meet the other supervision requirements of the SSC.

Definitions

Trip Leader - The camp's trip leader must meet the experience and age requirements in Subpart 7-2 (7-2.5(h)) and be competent in aquatic activities and/or be assisted by qualified staff. This person is the camp's liaison with the off-site facility and is responsible: (1) for supervising the camp's staff and campers participating in the activity; and (2) to determine that lifeguards (as defined in Part 6 of the SSC) are provided for the off-site aquatic activity. The trip leader enforces the buddy system. A trip leader, currently certified and qualified as a lifeguard or a water safety instructor, or an equivalent can also count toward the trained aquatic staff ratio for groups of 75 or fewer campers.

Counselors - The camp must provide trained counselors per Subpart 7-2 age dictated ratios for aquatic activities (7-2.11(a)(9)). Counselors should be assigned to supervise specific campers, and be made aware of any specific needs these campers may have. Counselors must actively supervise their assigned campers and be attentive in this role at all times. Additional counselors may be needed to adequately supervise campers off-site.

Trained Aquatic Staff – Means either a certified lifeguard or a certified water safety instructor, or person holding a certification determined to be equivalent (see current aquatic and progressive swimming instructor fact sheets).

Supplemental Information -

- Prearrange trips to off-site aquatic facilities well in advance. If possible, visit the facility prior to taking campers there. Exchange key contact information with the facility. Include the camp's address and emergency telephone number(s), and the names(s) of camp staff who will be in charge of the camp group at the facility. Obtain facility rules and requirements. Provide the facility information about your group, including the number in group. Determine the best time(s) for your visit, and what area(s) the campers may use, identifying areas off-limits to non-swimmers. A bathing area separated from other patrons is always desirable. Discuss the facility's supervision policies, and determine the role of camp staff. Determine what signals the camp can use to supervise campers and conduct the buddy system with the least interference to the facilities signal system. Determine what role the off-site facility will play in implementing your safety plan. Confirm your arrangements in writing with the facility, and maintain this written agreement on file. When the same individual (operator) is in charge of the children's camp and off-site bathing facility, a written agreement is not necessary; however, arrangements must still be made.
- A bathing facility located out-of-state or out-of-country may or may not meet, or be required to meet, the same operational and supervisory standards as facilities in New York State; the camp is still responsible for maintaining compliance with NYS supervision requirements.
- Establish an accountability (roll call, rather than "head count") and supervision plan for the visit. Define the duties of the trip leader, trained aquatic staff and counselors accompanying the campers. Outline accounting criteria to be used, including frequency of accounting and buddy checks, locations to meet if separated and identify persons to seek for assistance. Identify staff responsible for conducting accounting and buddy checks and review requirements with all staff. Provide adequate numbers of staff to meet required age specific ratios and meet any special needs of the campers.
- Update your camp's written plan to address use of each off-site aquatic location of your camp visits. Provide training to staff and campers about use of the facility prior to the visit.
- Upon arrival at the facility, notify the facility contact and verify arrangements for your visit. Reconfirm where your group will be and what signals your staff will use. Rely on facility staff judgement and directions for use of the facility.

Supervision Hints

- Buddy campers for entire visit.
- Use identifiers, such as a children's camp T-shirt, to aid in identification.
- Pair groups. At aquatic theme parks, this allows one counselor to monitor the group at the beginning of the activity, while one is positioned at the end to group campers upon completion of the activity. Staff must be responsible for supervising specific campers.
- Identify a location and specify times for groups to meet for accountability (name to camper) checks. This should be done at least midway through the visit, and just prior to departing the facility.
- Plan ahead to adequately supervise campers who don't wish to participate in certain activities, or must use the rest room.
- Use additional staff to act as "sweepers" to monitor the camp's participation at the facility to insure good counselor supervision, and identify and deal with potential problems.
- Some camps provide two-way radios to improve staff communication capabilities. If your camp provides these radios, be certain the radio frequency does not conflict with radios in use by the facility.
- Contact the facility well in advance to obtain information about the activities, restrictions, areas off-limits to non-swimmers, and general facility rules. Visit the facility if possible.