
The 'Note and Float' drowning prevention program

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The Note and Float program is a free, water safety program that has been piloted in the USA and is sure to save many lives. The program was created out of frustration caused by too many young non-swimming children drowning in swimming pools, water parks and open-water areas right in front of parents, and/or lifeguards.

Highlighting this problem are security camera video tapes showing children drowning with appropriate and professional supervision in close proximity to the victim. Another reason for the program is the documentation of two forms of 'body blindness' in the water: one is Physical Body Blindness caused by the 'ripple effect' on the surface of the water, the other is Cognitive Body Blindness caused by common visual errors. The vitally, important lifesaving program is encouraged to be required at all swimming facilities.

The note and float program is both simple and free. Whether the aquatic facility is private or public, the following six steps should be followed*:

1. Upon entering the swimming facility, all non-swimmers must register
2. Parents/guardians of non-swimmers receive site specific water safety information along with 'Learn-to-Swim' information
3. Parents/guardians are advised to supervise their children within arm's reach
4. Non-swimming children under 48 inches tall receive identifying wrist bands and properly fitting lifejackets (USCG approved). Guardians must accompany them into the water
5. Non-swimmers ages 8–12 must wear identifying wrist bands and lifejackets but guardians may be on the premises in close proximity but are not required to be in the water
6. Anyone who wishes to access deep water regardless of age or height, must either pass a swim test or wear a wrist band and lifejacket

* The above six steps may be modified slightly to accommodate different aquatic facilities and populations. This program was launched at Penn State University at its large outdoor pool open to the public in 1999. Since then the City of Winston, North Carolina, PA has adopted the program in its nine inner-city pools. Likewise, Upper St. Clair, PA has adopted the program.

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