



Considerations for Operating Backyard Swim Lesson Programs

Many YMCAs offer instructional swim programs at residential pools throughout the summer swim season. This long-offered program provides the opportunity for the YMCA to expand its programs and for families to enjoy quality programs in a convenient site.

As with many aquatic and offsite programs, Backyard Swim Programs have a number of unique risks that must be considered and well managed in order to protect the participants, staff and the organization.

Agreements and Documentation:

A written agreement, signed by both parties (homeowner and YMCA), should be utilized for all programs. The agreement should include at least the following:

- Name and contact information for both parties
- Description of property to be used and location
- Description of program, enrollment limits and times
- Indemnification and hold harmless statement(s)

In addition to the written agreement the following documentation should be obtained as part of the registration/agreement procedures:

- Emergency contact information for each participant
- Roster of participants
- Waiver signed by guardian for each youth participant or by individual if adult instruction is offered
- Certificate of homeowner's liability insurance
- Approval to operate program from YMCA's insurance provider

Program Administration:

The program should follow and be administered within the organization's adopted policies and in accordance with national program guidelines (YMCA, Red Cross, Starfish etc.). Program procedures should be in writing and include at least these items:

- Instructor and Lifeguard to participant ratios
- Supervision requirements
- Site-specific written emergency procedures/plan
- Inclimate weather and lightning plan
- Attendance tracking requirements
- Communication protocols
- Daily site (and equipment) inspection and water testing requirements
- Procedures to prevent the spread of recreational waterborne illnesses
- Diving boards, slides and other equipment should not be used

Site & Facilities:

- All pools must meet all federal, state and local codes
- Chemicals should be stored properly and secured; MSDS supplied
- Staff should have access to a landline phone
- Sites should be inspected by Director prior to signing an agreement for service and then again each day (by staff) prior to commencing program
- Restroom facilities should be supplied for staff and participants
- Shelter should be available for thunderstorms and other weather emergencies
- No pets or other swimmers should be allowed during program operation
- Water quality tests should be conducted and documented prior to each class

Supervision:

Adequate supervision that complies with YMCA policy and procedures should be available at all times during program. This should at least include:

- Certified instructor
- Certified Lifeguard
- Homeowner present
- Following youth protection guidelines for restroom use
- Adults should never be alone with youth where they cannot be easily observed by other adults
- Youth should not be alone with other youth

Equipment:

The written agreement should identify what equipment will be available and who (homeowner or YMCA) is responsible for supplying and maintaining equipment. Basic equipment should at least include:

- Instructional equipment such as noodles, bubbles or toys
- AED, emergency oxygen, first aid kit
- Rescue tube(s), CPR mask and gloves
- Reaching pole
- Other appropriate emergency equipment

More information about aquatic safety is available from the [Online Resource Library](#).