



Considerations for Aquatic Field Trips

Recommendations for use of off-site third-party aquatic facilities

It is important to establish minimum criteria for use when using a third-party (not owned or operated by your organization) aquatic facility for field trips. Criteria should be reviewed during a tour of the proposed facility and discussions with on-site staff in advance of any field trip. It is strongly recommended that you avoid aquatic facilities that do not meet minimum safety standards, and consider alternative trips or venues if you or the facility are unable to meet the following criteria.

Minimum Criteria:

- ✓ **Safe Location** - Field trips should only take place at facilities where certified lifeguards are provided. Supervision of the swimming and/or activity areas should be provided at a minimum of 1 lifeguard for every 25 participants. There must be safe areas for swimmers of all abilities. Swimming areas of appropriate depth must be defined for each ability group. The entire swimming area must be within sight and easy reach of designated lifeguards.
- ✓ **Parental Consent** - Parents of children attending field trips should sign a permission slip and / or waiver explaining the date, time, location, and nature of the trip, etc. Parent should also confirm their child's ability to swim, i.e. swimmer or non-swimmer.
- ✓ **Contract & Insurance** – Obtain an agreement and / or contract for services provided by the facility, as well as an original Certificate of Insurance naming your organization as an “Additional Insured”.
- ✓ **Compliance with codes** – Ensure the venue meets and follows state & local aquatic safety codes and has an AED (Automated External Defibrillator) on-site. Facility should also have a tested mode of communication with EMS (Emergency Medical Services / 911). This can be accomplished during a pre-visit tour of the facility or even by calling your state or local health department for verification.
- ✓ **Supervision** – All trips should be minimally supervised by an adult staff person age 21 or older, who is trained in CPR/AED & First Aid. A minimum ratio of 1 staff or adult for every 4 children is highly recommended when swimming is involved. Program staff should be strategically placed in and around the designated swimming area and actively watching all swimmers. All children, swimming or not, should be under constant adult supervision.
- ✓ **Non-swimmers** - A non-swimmer area should be designated in no more than waist to arm-pit deep water and should be enclosed by physical boundaries such as the deck, shore, buoy lines and program staff in and out of the water.
- ✓ **Buddy system** – A [buddy system](#) should be instituted on all field trips.

(Additional preferred criteria on next page.)

Additional Preferred Criteria:

Supervision

It is strongly recommended that your organization provide additional lifeguard supervision to assist in planning and conducting all swimming activities. Ensure that all additional program staff and volunteers receive training in the following prior to arrival at the venue:

- Additional supervision responsibilities specific to the venue.
- [Emergency procedures](#) in the event of an injury or a submersion incident.
- Procedures in the event of a missing child.
- Aquatic safety policies and procedures for the aquatic facilities.
- Implementation and enforcement of the [buddy system](#).
- Program-specific aquatic safety policies.
- Staff roles for [swim testing procedures](#).
- Specific supervision responsibilities for the aquatic facility.
- Supervision of children who are not actively swimming.

Swim Testing

All swimmers should be [swim tested](#) and wear swimming ability band or designation. Testing should be conducted by a certified lifeguard and minimally include:

1.) swimming comfortably 25 yards from deep to shallow without touching the bottom or sides of a pool or swimming area; 2.) jumping into water that is over the child's head and returning to the surface; 3.) treading water for one minute; turn on their back, float briefly, and exit the water.

Non-swimmers

Anyone who has not completed the swim test is classified as a non-swimmer. It is highly recommended that non-swimmers be required to wear a [US Coast Guard approved PFD](#).

Safe Swimming Procedure and Rules

Rules are effective only when followed. All children should know, understand, and respect the rules and procedures for safe swimming. Rules and procedures should be discussed prior to the outing and reviewed for all children at the water's edge just before the swimming activity begins. Children are more likely to follow directions when they know the reasons for rules and procedures. Consistent, impartially applied rules supported by swim testing and good judgment provide a bridge to a safe, enjoyable outing.

Special Features – Visit our [Safe-Wise Online Resource Library](#) for additional resources and specific information on venues that offer wave pools, slides and other special water features.