



#97 SUPERVISION OF 4-H SWIMMING ACTIVITIES



Photograph Courtesy of Tulare County 4-H Program

Information available from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicates drowning is the second leading cause of unintentional death for children aged one to 14 years. During 2007 more than 800 drowning fatalities occurred in the age range from five through 24 years. Lack of adequate supervision is often the cause of accidental drowning and water-related injuries among children. Clover Safe #60, Swimming Safety, discusses 4-H YDP policy concerning lifeguards and presents tips for safety at 4-H swimming activities. This Clover Safe provides additional guidance for adult supervisors at 4-H swimming activities.

The role of the supervising adults (chaperones) at 4-H YDP swimming or water activities is not to be a rescuer, but to provide an increased level of supervision for the youth in and near the water. Supervising adults should use the following guidelines:

- Before the activity begins, explain the rules for the swimming area and any restrictions, such as “off limits” areas.
- Each supervising adult should be assigned a group of up to 5 youth swimmers that they will monitor. Alternatively, the supervising adults may divide the swimming area into zones, with each supervisor responsible for the youth swimmers in their zone.
- Keep your eyes on the water and activity. Supervising adults must not be distracted by other activities such as reading, using the telephone, etc.
- Assess the swimming ability of the youth swimmers you are supervising so you can be aware of any swimmers that pose a higher risk.
- If you observe a youth swimmer in distress, summon the lifeguard and instruct the other youth swimmers to clear the area.
- Conduct frequent head counts to maintain supervision of your group. If a youth swimmer goes missing, summon the lifeguard and initiate procedures for a missing youth.



Photograph Courtesy of Shasta County 4-H Program

The table below summarizes safety supervision practices for 4-H swimming activities.

Safety Practice	Safety Practice Reference	Swimming Location			
		Public Swimming Pool or Beach	4-H Camp Swimming at Ocean, Lake, River, or Stream	4-H Camp Swimming at Pool	Swimming at Private Pool or Beach
One lifeguard for every 25 swimmers. Note: 4-H leaders can presume that lifeguards at public pools or beaches are provided at sufficient ratios.	California Code of Regulations, Title 17, Section 30741 d 2		X		
	4-H Policy Handbook: Ch. 11, Section XXIII B 4 e	X	X	X	X
Lifeguard(s) shall be certified at appropriate level, such as pool depth, ocean, or waterfront (river or lake).	4-H Policy Handbook: Chapter 11, Section XXIII B 4 c	X	X	X	X
Minimum of two supervising adults for up to 10 swimmers. Additional supervising adult: for every additional 5 swimmers.	4-H Policy Handbook: Chapter 11, Section XXIII B 8	X	X	X	X
Supervising adults shall concentrate on observing swimmers.	4-H best practice	X	X	X	X

Additional safety information for 4-H swimming is given in the 4-H Water Safety Guidelines (<http://safety.ucanr.edu/files/3068.pdf>) and Clover Safe #60 Swimming Safety (<http://safety.ucanr.edu/files/3268.pdf>)