

AB 1005 – Drowning Prevention

Drowning Prevention and Water Safety Education

SUMMARY

To prevent drownings, AB 1005 seeks to bring drowning prevention information to parents and children by partnering with schools to increase knowledge. This bill also defines swim lessons as an essential public health service. Increasing a child’s awareness of water safety at a young age, as well as expanding access to swim lessons, are key prevention tools. Having swim skills reduces drowning events by 88%.

BACKGROUND

Since 1991, drowning has taken the lives of more than 12,500 Californians.¹ Drowning is the leading cause of death for California children aged 1-4 years, the second leading cause of death for children ages 5-14, and the third leading cause of death for California’s teens and youth.² Crucially, drowning disproportionately affects communities of color and low-income families.

Drowning is medically defined as the process of experiencing respiratory impairment from submersion or immersion in liquid, leading to hypoxia, or lack of oxygen to the brain. For children aged 1-4 years old, most incidents of drowning occur in residential pools. Teens and youth, however, are more likely to drown in open bodies of water (i.e., lakes, rivers, oceans, etc.). Drowning can be fatal or non-fatal, but still lead to serious brain injury.

For every child who dies from drowning, another ten receive emergency care for non-fatal drowning.³ Non-fatal drowning can result in long-term health problems and costly hospital stays. More than 28% of drownings treated in emergency departments require hospitalization or transfer for further care...

...compared with 8% for all unintentional injuries.⁴ Brain injuries caused by non-fatal drowning can cause irreversible brain damage and other serious outcomes, which can lead to lifelong learning deficiencies and other physical impairments.

Improving water safety knowledge and teaching swim skills are a keyway to reduce drowning. Studies show that individuals with these skills are up to 88% less likely to suffer a drowning incident.⁵

THE PROBLEM

Current law does not “authorize” or provide uniform authority for schools to partner with local, state, and national drowning prevention organizations or children’s safety organizations to help reach parents/caregivers with information on water safety and where to access swim lessons. As a result, it takes a school several months of administration work to allow a school’s principal, or vice principal to partner with local drowning prevention or children’s safety organization to provide education and information on water safety and drowning prevention to the school’s parents. In addition, swimming lessons are not currently codified as an essential public health service for all ages. Even though having swim skills prevents drowning by up to 88% swim lesson programs are not considered important public health services or actions like child car safety seats, vaccines, CPR skills, etc.

THE SOLUTION

AB 1005 will authorize schools to work with designated drowning prevention organizations to provide drowning prevention education to parents and families at no cost to the school. It also requires the organization working with the schools to provide parents with information on accessing local swim lessons for their children. Expands California’s existing aquatic curriculum in the Education Code to cover not just grades 9th through 12th but 1st through 12th grades. This legislation will also codify the 2021 declaration by the Secretary of Health and Human Services and the Department of

¹ [WHO Global Health Estimates 2019](#)

² [Department of Developmental Services, CA DPH EPICenter and CDC WISQARS](#)

³ [CDC | Drowning Facts](#)

⁴ [CDC | Drowning Facts](#)

⁵ [“Association Between Swimming Lessons and Drowning in Childhood”](#)

Public Health that, due to the positive impact swim skills have on reducing drowning by 88%, swimming lessons for all ages of children are deemed “essential public health services”.

SUPPORT

Drowning Prevention Foundation (Co-sponsor)
California Coalition for Children’s Safety and Health (Co-sponsor)
Children’s Advocacy Institute, University San Diego School of Law
CA Pool and Spa Association
Personal Insurance Federal of California
Association of CA Life Health Insurance Companies
Drowning prevention organizations
Affected families who have lost a child to drowning.

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