

Washington State
**Open Water Drowning Prevention:
Policy Strategies for Children and Youth**
2011–2016



Drowning is one of the leading causes of unintentional death among children and youth. In Washington State, drowning is the second leading cause of unintentional injury death among ages 1–17. In our state, drowning deaths usually occur in open water, such as lakes, rivers, streams, ponds, Puget Sound, and the Pacific Ocean.

Open water drownings are preventable. In a review of unintentional child and youth drownings between 1999–2003, the Washington State Child Death Review (CDR) determined that 85 percent of those drownings were preventable. Interventions, such as life jacket use and lifeguards, could have prevented those deaths.

Everyone can help prevent child and youth drownings and improve open water recreation safety. Together, communities, organizations, cities, counties, and Washington State can promote, develop, implement, and evaluate organizational, regulatory, and legislative policies to improve open water safety for Washington State’s children, youth, and families.

The Washington State Open Water Drowning Prevention: Policy Strategies for Children and Youth 2011–2016 identifies seven priority areas for policy, system, and environmental change:

- Safer Water Recreation Sites
- Life Jackets
- Boating Under the Influence and Open Water Enforcement
- Surveillance
- Swimming Skills and Water Safety Education
- Physical Open Water Barriers
- Partnerships

For each priority area, the Washington State Child and Youth Open Water Drowning Prevention Policy Task Force, together with the Washington State Drowning Prevention Network and local and national resource representatives, identified short- and long-term strategies. These strategies provide communities, organizations, cities, counties, and Washington State with specific ways to prevent open water drownings and to improve open water safety and water recreation opportunities in Washington State.

For more information and resources, please visit the Drowning Prevention Policy page:
<http://www.seattlechildrens.org/dp/>



Safer Water Recreation Sites

Children and youth deserve safer places to play, swim, and enjoy other activities in Washington State's open waters.

2011 – 2012

STRATEGIES:

- Identify existing water recreation safety standards for bathing beaches, swim areas, and other high use water recreation areas to address issues such as drop-offs, lifeguard coverage, water risks, and rescue equipment availability
- Research and compile recommended best practices for water safety signs and symbols

MEASURES OF SUCCESS:

- Site standards identified and shared with water recreation organizations
- Identified and agreed upon signage recommendations
- Lifeguard training standards developed and shared with water recreation organizations

Policy Change in Action

Through policy advocacy, the King County Child Death Review (CDR) Team helped prevent youth drowning in the Lake Washington Ship Canal. On behalf of the CDR Team, the Public Health Seattle & King County Director sent a letter to the Mayor, City Council, and Police Chief supporting and encouraging the prohibition of swimming in the Lake Washington Ship Canal. With the CDR Team's support, the Seattle Harbor Code prohibited swimming in the Lake Washington Ship Canal. Since the revision of the Harbor Code, there have not been any youth drownings in the Lake Washington Ship Canal.

2013 – 2016

STRATEGIES:

- Develop and pass safer water recreation site standards for Washington State bathing beaches and swim areas
- Develop and implement standards for open water safety signs and symbols
- Promote open water safety rescue and training standards for group supervision settings (e.g., licensed child care providers and summer camp leaders)
- Promote access to lifeguarded beaches during summer recreational months

MEASURES OF SUCCESS:

- Site standards developed, shared, and passed
- Signage standards developed and shared with water recreation organizations
- Healthy Youth Survey results indicate increased use of designated and/or lifeguarded swim areas for youth
- Training standards available for group supervision settings
- Availability of lifeguarded beaches in the summer months



Life Jackets

Life jackets protect everyone in, on, and around open water.

2011 – 2012

STRATEGIES:

- Improve Washington State child life jacket law to require children age 17 and under to wear life jackets on boats
- Increase number of life jacket loaner programs at sites used by swimmers and boaters
- Promote life jacket use at city, county, and state parks
- Develop and promote standard signage for life jacket loaner programs

MEASURES OF SUCCESS:

- Improved child life jacket law proposed
- Increased number of life jacket loaner programs
- Increased access to life jackets and information at public parks with water access
- Increased consistency in life jacket loaner program signage across the state

2013 – 2016

STRATEGIES:

- Improved child life jacket law bill is heard by the legislature
- Implement policies at the local level allowing life jackets in pools and at bathing beaches
- Develop and implement policies requiring mandatory life jacket use when on high risk/high use waterways

MEASURES OF SUCCESS:

- Increased use of life jackets
- Improved child life jacket law implemented
- Increased number of local level policies requiring life jackets
- Increased access to life jackets at public pools and bathing beaches

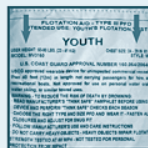
Policy Change in Action

In July 2010, the Associated Press issued a release highlighting the enforcement of an all ages life jacket requirement on the Spokane River. According to the Associated Press, the Spokane County Sheriff's Office Marine Patrol Unit wrote over 45 tickets for life jacket violations on one day. Deputies also reminded people that everyone, including people in inner tubes, must wear a life jacket. Only swimmers are exempt from the life jacket requirement.

Borrow a Life Jacket Toma prestado un chaleco salvavidas



1
Borrow a life jacket.
Toma prestado un chaleco salvavidas.



2
Check the label – Choose the right size.
Comprueba la etiqueta – Elige el tamaño correcto.



3
Fasten all buckles, zippers and straps.
Abrocha todas las hebillas, cierres y correas.



4
Make sure it fits correctly. It should be snug, but not tight.
Asegúrate de que te quede correctamente. Debe quedarte ajustado pero no apretado.



5
Wear it here. Leave it here.
Usalo aquí. Déjalo aquí.

Supported By:

In Partnership With:
Washington State Drowning Prevention Network



Provide adult supervision at all times
Borrow and use life jacket at your own risk
Proporcionar supervisión adulta en todo momento
Toma prestado y usa chaleco salvavidas bajo tu propio riesgo

Life Jackets Save Lives
Los chalecos salvavidas salvan vidas

Boating Under the Influence and Open Water Enforcement

Open water safety, like road safety, is a priority for Washington State.

2011 – 2012

STRATEGIES:

- Strengthen Washington State's boating under the influence (BUI) law, including implied consent and increased penalties

MEASURES OF SUCCESS:

- Improved BUI law passed and communicated to marine law enforcement and the boating public
- High visibility enforcement
- Number of citations issued

2013 – 2016

STRATEGIES:

- Promote water and boating safety training at both local and state level for marine patrol and state park rangers
- Improve marine patrol staffing, supported by boater registration fees

MEASURES OF SUCCESS:

- Open water safety training occurs for both marine patrol and state park rangers
- Changes in boater registration fees

Policy Change in Action

The Washington Alliance for Mandatory Boater Education (WAMBE), a group comprised of representatives from the boating industry, recreation boating groups, government, law enforcement, and marine safety groups, formed in 2002 with the sole purpose of developing and passing a bill for mandatory boater education in Washington. Governor Gregoire signed the bill into law in May 2005.



Surveillance

We can learn from fatal and non-fatal drowning among children and youth to prevent future tragedies.

2011 – 2012

STRATEGIES:

- Add questions on swimming ability and use of designated/lifeguarded swim areas to the Healthy Youth Survey
- Identify all available data sources and content on child and youth open water drowning
- Conduct life jacket observations of recreational boaters and develop plan to repeat every three years

MEASURES OF SUCCESS:

- Questions added to Healthy Youth Survey
- Data sources and information compiled
- Life jacket observations conducted

Policy Change in Action

The drowning prevention report, done by the Washington State Office of Financial Management in 2002, recommends the State Parks and Recreation risk management position reports at the executive headquarter level. The parks risk manager addresses all agency functions, including incident data collection and analysis, loss prevention analysis and training, and intra/inter-agency liaison work around drowning prevention and other risk areas.

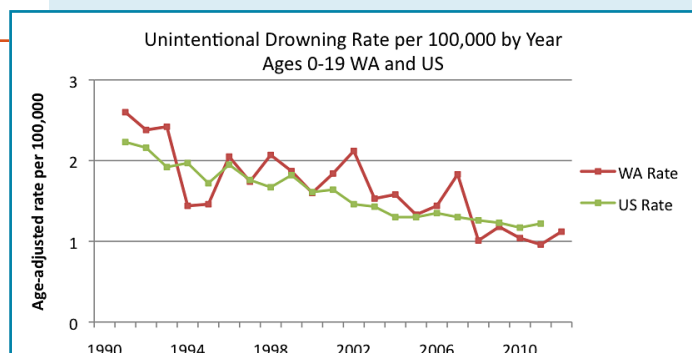
2013 – 2016

STRATEGIES:

- Develop and implement standards for drowning death data collection including:
 - standardized drowning death investigation procedures
 - criteria to determine when an autopsy is needed
 - blood alcohol levels on death certificates
 - toxicology screens of children 10 years and older
- Support the continuation of local and state Washington Child Death Review (CDR) to review drowning deaths and identify risk factors
- Develop a comprehensive database to track all fatal and non-fatal drownings
- Require reporting of fatal and non-fatal drownings that occur in state, county, and city parks

MEASURES OF SUCCESS:

- Drowning death data collection standards used by marine patrol, coroners, and medical examiners
- CDR teams review drowning deaths
- Existence of drowning database
- Reporting of drownings that occur in public parks



Swimming Skills and Water Safety Education

All children, youth, and families can access swim lessons and water safety education to safely enjoy water recreation activities in Washington State.

2011 – 2012

STRATEGIES:

- Increase access to swimming, especially among low-income and culturally diverse children, youth, and families

MEASURES OF SUCCESS:

- Policy changes implemented to increase access to swimming

Policy Change in Action

Everyone Swims is a partnership of over 30 pools, aquatic recreation organizations, and community health clinics in Seattle and King County. They are working together to develop and implement policies and systems that will increase access to swimming and water recreation opportunities in underserved populations. *Everyone Swims* focuses on improving scholarship eligibility policies and systems, changing policies and practices in community clinics to include screening for swimming ability in children, and developing a system to address barriers to swimming and water recreation.

2013 – 2016

STRATEGIES:

- Promote swimming skill competency and water safety education requirements for all youth in school

MEASURES OF SUCCESS:

- Number of school districts that offer swimming skills and/or water safety education
- Document number of public swim lesson programs with low cost or no cost options



Physical Open Water Barriers

Physical open water barriers protect Washington State’s children and youth.

2011 – 2012

STRATEGIES:

No strategies identified for 2011–2012

Policy Change in Action

In 2007, the Washington State Building Code Council (WSBCC) moved the optional private pool and spa barrier provisions of the 2006 International Residential Code from the appendix to the body of the Code, which made private pool and spa barriers a statewide requirement for new construction. As a staff person from the WSBCC described, the change, “was a monumental move...in fact it passed unanimously.” While the change took a significant amount of time, the Code revision was a major public health triumph for the children of Washington State.

2013 – 2016

STRATEGIES:

- Identify and promote standards for fencing around irrigation ditches and private ponds

MEASURES OF SUCCESS:

- Standards developed and shared



Partnerships

Open water safety is everyone's responsibility.

2011 – 2012

STRATEGIES:

- Build partnerships with organizations, associations, and coalitions involved in water safety and water recreation
- Create opportunities for networking and collaboration on drowning prevention, water safety, and water recreation
- Identify policy priorities for the Washington State Drowning Prevention Network
- Build partnerships around open water drowning prevention policy with organizations, including:
American Red Cross, Boards of Health – state and county, Child Death Review Teams, city and county jurisdictions, Emergency Medical Services and fire agencies, families, Harborview Injury Prevention and Research Center, Injury Prevention and Public Education Technical Advisory Committee, Inland Northwest Drowning Prevention Coalition, insurance companies, local health jurisdictions, Parent Teacher Associations, pools, Recreational Boating Association of Washington, Safe Kids Coalitions, Seattle King County Drowning Prevention Coalition, Target Zero Traffic Safety Managers, U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, U.S. Power Squadrons, Washington Association of Coroners and Medical Examiners, Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs, Washington Boating Alliance, Washington Chapter American Academy of Pediatrics, Washington Recreation and Parks Association – Aquatics Section, Washington State Association of Cities, Washington State Association of Counties, Washington State Drowning Prevention Network, Washington State Hospital Association, Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission's Boating Safety Advisory Council, YMCA.

2013 – 2016

STRATEGIES:

- Develop, propose, and pass a state statute that requires agency accountability for drowning prevention and water safety
- Establish dedicated funding that includes drowning prevention at the state level



Resources and Other Washington State Drowning Prevention Priorities

Prevention Strategy References

Washington State Drowning Prevention Network and Policy Resources

www.seattlechildrens.org/dp/

Washington State Injury and Violence Prevention Guide. Department of Health, January 2013

www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/2900/InjuryReportFinal.pdf

Washington State Childhood Injury Report, November 2004

www.childdeathreview.org/reports/WashingtonStateChildhoodInjuryReport.pdf

Child Death Review State Committee Recommendations on Child Drowning Prevention, 2004

www.childdeathreview.org/reports/WADrowning.pdf

EuroSafe European Association for Injury Prevention and Safety Promotion

www.eurosafe.eu.com/csi/eurosafe2006.nsf/wwwVwContent/l2europeanchildsafetyalliance.htm

Policy Framework References

A User's Guide to Advocacy Evaluation Planning. Harvard Family Research Project, 2009

Available at: www.hfrp.org

Building Capacity for Public Policy Tool Kit. National Council of Nonprofit Associations State Policy Action Resource Center, Fall 2004. Available at: www.ncna.org

Injury and Violence Prevention Behavior Change Theories, Methods and Applications. A Gielen, DA Sleet, R DiClemente (Eds.) San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. 2006.

Washington State Child and Youth Open Water Drowning Prevention Policy Task Force

Members

Julie Awbrey, Spokane Regional Health District

Todd Baker, Clark County Sheriff's Office

Maria Benavides, Yakima Valley Farmworkers Clinic

Elizabeth (Tizzy) Bennett, Seattle Children's Hospital

Mary Borges, Safe Kids Washington and Washington State Department of Health

Celeste Chung, Seattle Children's Hospital

Hugh Ewart, Seattle Children's Hospital

Tony Gomez, Public Health Seattle & King County

Susan Kavanaugh, Washington State Parks & Recreation Boating Program

Ethan Newton, Covington Aquatic Center

Lynda Nutt, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Diane Pilkey, Washington State Department of Health

Jeff Polello, YMCA of the Inland Northwest

Dinah Pomeroy, Attorney

Linda Quan, Seattle Children's and University of Washington School of Medicine

SueAnn Reese, Washington State Department of Health

Alex Sheldon, Seattle Children's Hospital

Dan Shipman, U.S. Coast Guard 13th District

Deanna White, Paris White Foundation

Kathy Williams, Washington State Department of Health

Facilitators: Vic Colman and Robbi Kay Norman, Uncommon Solutions

Resource Representatives

Tanya Chin Ross, Safe Kids Worldwide

Beth Ebel, Harborview Injury Prevention and Research Center

Gary Fraser, Washington State Department of Health

James Horan, Washington State Parks Boating Program

Dan Hudson, Pierce County Sheriff's Office

Jeff Johnson, Alaska Office of Boating Safety

Diane Jones, Seattle Parks and Recreation

Alan Korn, Safe Kids Worldwide

Martin Law, Oregon State Marine Board

Jennifer Sabel, Washington State Department of Health

Ellen Schmidt, Children's Safety Network

Roger Schmidt, LifeSaving Signs

Erica Streit-Kaplan, Children's Safety Network

Dona Wolfe, Washington State Parks Boating Program



Contacts

Elizabeth 'Tizzy' Bennett

Seattle Children's Hospital
4800 Sand Point Way NE
M/S M1-9 PO Box 5371
Seattle, WA 98105

Elizabeth.bennett@seattlechildrens.org

Kathy Williams

Office of Community Health Systems
Injury and Violence Prevention Program
Washington State Department of Health
PO Box 47853


Olympia, WA 98504-7853

Kathy.williams@doh.wa.gov

For more information, visit the Drowning Prevention Policy page at
<http://www.seattlechildrens.org/dp/>



Seattle Children's
HOSPITAL · RESEARCH · FOUNDATION



This document was supported by grant #1U17CE001778-01 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors, and do not represent the views of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

For persons with disabilities this document is available on request in other formats.
To submit a request, please call 1-800-525-0127 (TTY/TDD 711).