

DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES ADMINISTRATION  
RESIDENTIAL HABILITATION CENTER  
STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

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TITLE: WATER SAFETY PROCEDURE 105.1

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**PURPOSE**

To establish safety procedures that protect Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) clients recreating in, on, or alongside the water.

**SCOPE**

This standard operating procedure applies to all employees and volunteers when serving a residential habilitation center (RHC) resident who is recreating in, on, or alongside the water. This procedure does not apply to physical or occupational therapy in water, or to any activity at a public swimming pool where a professional lifeguard is on duty.

**PROCEDURES**

A. Precautions.

Take the following precautions whenever a client is within 15 feet of water that is deeper than three feet, unless a barrier such as an ADA approved railing 42 inches high, a fence, or thick brush makes the water difficult to access.

1. Staffing:
  - a. At least two staff members must be present.
  - b. Maintain line-of-sight supervision of all clients, unless more supportive supervision is indicated in the client's individual habilitation plan, patient care plan, or positive behavior support plan.
  - c. Employees and volunteers must also comply with WAC 296-800-16070(1) (personal floatation device) and WAC 296-800-16070(2) (life ring with attached line).

2. If the client is not expected to enter the water:
    - a. Place each client in a personal floatation device (PFD) and adjust it to fit comfortably.
    - b. If the client is in a wheelchair or a similar device, unbuckle any straps that attach the client to it.
  3. If the client is expected to enter the water:
    - a. Whenever practical, choose an area where a lifeguard is present.
    - b. Place each client in a PFD and adjust it to fit comfortably, unless the interdisciplinary team has revised the client's individual habilitation plan, patient care plan, or positive behavior support plan to modify the PFD requirement.
    - c. If the client is in a wheelchair or a similar device, follow the client's support plan for water activities.
- B. Emergency response.
1. Call for the lifeguard; if there is no lifeguard, yell for help.
  2. Designate one staff member to dial 911.
  3. Designate one staff member to remain with the other clients; if only two staff members are present, the staff member who dials 911 may remain with the clients.
  4. Remaining staff may participate directly in rescue efforts to the extent of their ability.

### **AUTHORITY**

42 C.F.R. Sec. 483.420 (11)  
Chapter 71A RCW *Developmental Disabilities*

### **DEFINITIONS**

“PFD” means a U. S. Coast Guard certified inherently buoyant type I or II personal floatation device.

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**SUPERSESION**

None.

Approved:     /s/ Donald Clintsman      
Deputy Assistant Secretary  
Developmental Disabilities Administration

Date: April 15, 2017