

Camp Safety Training: Facilitator's Guide

Aquatic Safety at the Pool

Discussion Questions

- What is our responsibility when we're with campers at the pool?
- What techniques will help prevent our campers from drowning?
- What are the challenges when taking campers to the bathroom at the pool? How can we address them?

Activity #1

Name of activity: Give Me Five

Length of activity: 10 minutes

By simply brainstorming the ideas and takeaways from the Aquatic Safety at the Pool video together, you can both encourage reflection and discussion, and also get a sense of staff learning styles and retention. This will give you a sense of what learning will need to be reinforced.

Objectives:

1. Staff will be able to communicate what their role is in maintaining safety at the pool.
2. Staff will be able to offer specific strategies for implementing aquatic safety.

Materials:

Markers, sticky note pads and large chart paper or white board located in front of group.

Instructions:

1. Break into small groups. Write five takeaways together (five minutes) – one on each sticky note.
2. The facilitator can prompt the groups by asking what they remember, what specific actions they would now take differently, and what they think are the most important lessons. It's a good idea to also ask how the role of lifeguard and camp counselor, or staff member, are different.
3. Each group shares sticky notes with the whole group. Write or have someone scribe on sticky notes what the group comes up with.

Activity #2

Name of activity: Everybody Say Swim Test

Length of activity: Time needed to swim test all staff

Swim testing campers can be complex and challenging, especially in large groups. By having your staff go through the motions of swim testing before campers arrive, you will give them a better understanding of the real-world processes involved, and the challenges that might come up. It also provides an opportunity for you to learn about your staff's swimming ability and comfort around the water.

Objectives:

1. All staff will understand and experience the components of passing a swim test.
2. Staff will better understand how they can support the lifeguards during swim testing.

Materials:

None, but all participants will need to be swim ready.

Instructions:

1. Take your staff to the pool.
2. Lead them through exactly how it will look from start to finish when their campers are there for the first time and guards are assessing swim ability.

Note: *Large staffed camps may have sub-groups move through a rotation at the pool. This activity can be led together with the aquatics team and lead counselors/unit heads or of course, a staff member of your choice.*

3. Debrief with the following questions:
 - What will be my role during the swim test with campers?
 - What would I do if a camper doesn't pass their swim test and is upset?
 - How do I keep campers occupied while waiting to take their swim test?
 - What if a camper does not want to take the test and everyone else does?

PLEASE NOTE: If you do not have access to a pool or if you go offsite for swim activities, then spend your time reviewing the following points:

- There should be a swim test consisting of swimming a certain length of the pool, treading water and putting head underwater.
- If the pool does not do a swim test, assume everyone is a non-swimmer and must stay in arm's reach of a staff member and in the shallow end only – even if they say they can swim.
- Everyone should be swimmer-ready when taking campers to an on or offsite pool.

Activity #3

Name of activity: What's Wrong

Length of activity: 15 minutes

It's easy for staff and counselors to assume that lifeguards are responsible for monitoring the water, but the truth is that drowning victims are more often spotted by other swimmers. Teaching everyone what it means to be vigilant in and around the water will ensure you have as many eyes as possible trained on your campers and keeping them safe.

Objectives:

1. Keeping campers safe is everyone's responsibility.
2. Lifeguards need our help in preventing drownings.

Materials & Preparation:

- Towels
- Access to a pool
- Lifeguards
- A few senior staff members if multiple guards are not available

Instructions:

1. Have lifeguards and senior staff go to the pool before the group of trainees gets there.
2. Ask them to place one or two towels on the bottom of the pool – in a corner, near the edge, or somewhere else not obvious.
3. Ask all but one of the guards (there should always be a guard on duty when anyone is in the pool) to get in the pool to swim and play.
4. Bring the rest of the staff to the pool and ask them to identify anything they see wrong. Tell them to silently raise their hand and not call out any answers.
5. Wait for more than half the hands are raised, or time it to see how long it takes everyone to raise their hands. (There will be some who raise their hands just to be part of the group and really did not see anything wrong...)
6. Debrief this exercise at the pool with lifeguards and staff:
 - Did everyone see the towel on the bottom?
 - Did you know it was a towel? How?
 - What made it difficult to see the towel (glare, ripples, swimmers)?
 - What are ways to help guards at the pool?