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## ADVISORY

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To: Recreational Camp and Municipal Program Operators

From: Steven Hughes, Director, Community Sanitation Program (CSP), Bureau of Climate and Environmental Health

Date: June 14, 2024

Re: Extreme Heat-Related Illness and Preventative Measures for Recreational Camp and Municipal Program Operators

Many summer recreational camps for children and municipal programs offer outdoor activities which involve strenuous physical exercise during the extreme heat and humidity. During high heat and humidity events, even young and healthy children can be at risk of heat-related illness. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued [guidance on preventing heat-related illness](#) to protect individuals through prevention, identification, and treatment. The Massachusetts Department of Public Health's Bureau of Climate and Environmental Health (BCEH) offers recreational camp and municipal program operators this advisory to review, implement, and share preventative measures with their staff and volunteers.

The first step to mitigating risk is preparation. The CDC, in partnership with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) National Weather Service (NWS), has developed a [HeatRisk Dashboard](#) to provide a nationwide seven-day heat forecast model. This tool enables users to search by zip code, identify when air temperatures may reach levels that could negatively impact their health, and provides recommendations on actions to be taken to safeguard their health during extreme heat events. This summer CSP will use this tool periodically to alert operators of predicted heat waves and to remind operators of regulatory requirements and best practices. CSP also encourages operators to use the tool for themselves to plan for major and extreme heat events.

The two most important tools to protect against heat-related illness is to maintain a low core body temperature and provide drinking water to stay hydrated. Regulation *105 CMR 430.000: Minimum Standards for Recreational Camps for Children (State Sanitary Code Chapter IV)*, sets forth minimum standards for housing, health, safety, and sanitary conditions for minors attending recreational camps for children in the Commonwealth. These requirements and suggested best practices identified below, provide an opportunity for recreational camp and municipal program operators to safeguard their campers, staff, and volunteers from heat-related illness:

- Educate campers and parents about the importance of hydration. Send fact sheets home at the beginning of the season or before a predicted heat wave:
  - [Heat Stress: Hydration \(cdc.gov\)](#);
  - [Estrés por calor: Hidratación \(cdc.gov\)](#);
- Create accessible fun cooling water stations during outdoor events (sprinklers, misters, etc.);
- Schedule water breaks frequently throughout the day in shaded or indoor areas;
- Provide artificial shaded areas with canopies or tents, when natural shade is not available;
- Provide ice as needed;
- Reschedule outdoor activities to the coolest part of the day, like the morning and evening hours;
- Increase ventilation to sleeping and assembly areas, provide fans if possible;

- Ensure windows that get late morning and/or afternoon sun are covered or tinted;
- Encourage everyone to wear clothing to keep cooler and protect from the sun:
  - Light-colored and loose-fitting clothing helps to reflect heat and promote airflow;
  - Hats or light scarfs protect the head, neck and face from sun exposure;
- Use sunscreen - **always**;
- Increase access to safe recreational swimming or water related activities:
  - Provide swimming only at permitted beaches and swimming pools that comply with water quality and clarity standards and have appropriate safety measures in place such as lifeguards, trained staff, and safety equipment;
  - Ensure there is sufficient natural or artificial shade available for those children and staff waiting in line to enter the swimming area, or for those children and staff who are not swimming;
  - Plan ahead to ensure there is an appropriate number of lifeguards overseeing the water, during expected high volume use, when swimming is offered during extreme heat:
    - Use other staff to monitor pool decks on high heat/high volume days;
    - Ensure there is enough disinfection and treatment chemicals available to maintain a safe and healthy pool during operation and after (for shocking procedures);
    - Conduct water testing more frequently than the minimum 4 times a day to maintain the disinfection level during and after high use and excessive UV (sun) which both affect pool chemistry;
- Train on-site Health Care Supervisors and other camp staff/volunteers on the signs, symptoms, and increased risk factors for heat-related illness (e.g. obesity, asthma, and medication use);
- Implement a buddy system for observing fellow staff/volunteers for early signs and symptoms of heat-related illness;
- Identify priority locations in cooler areas to be made available for heat sensitive, at-risk, or new campers and staff/volunteers who may not be acclimated to extreme heat conditions; and
- Camps that provide sport related activities should take additional precautions to schedule activities and rest breaks to protect their young athletes. Refer to the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA) [Heat Modification Policy](#).

Listed below are further details on the signs and symptoms of the different types of heat-related illness, and what you should do if you see someone in distress from the heat. When in doubt, call 911 or emergency medical services.

Additional information is available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/warning.html>

Signs of Heat Cramps	You Should	Go to the Hospital if:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heavy sweating</li> <li>• Muscle pain or spasms (often in the abdomen, arms, or calves)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Give them water, clear juice, or a sports drink</b></li> <li>• Tell them to stop exerting themselves and/or stop physical activity and move to a cool place</li> <li>• Have them wait for cramps to go away before doing any more physical activity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The person has a history of heart problems</li> <li>• Cramps last longer than 1 hour</li> <li>• The person is on a low sodium diet</li> </ul>
Signs of Heat Exhaustion	You Should:	Go to the Hospital if:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lots of sweating</li> <li>• Fast/weak pulse</li> <li>• Nausea/vomiting</li> <li>• Headache/dizziness</li> <li>• Fainting (passing out)</li> <li>• Muscle cramps</li> <li>• Cold, pale, and clammy skin</li> <li>• Fatigue/tiredness/or weakness</li> <li>• Irritability</li> <li>• Thirst</li> <li>• Decreased urine output</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Give them water</b></li> <li>• Move them to a cool place</li> <li>• Allow them to lie down</li> <li>• Loosen their clothes or change into lightweight clothing</li> <li>• Apply cool wet towels or cloths on the person</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The person is throwing up</li> <li>• The person is getting worse</li> <li>• Symptoms last longer than 1 hour</li> <li>• The person has heart problems or high blood pressure</li> </ul>

Signs of Heat Stroke	You Should:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fast, strong pulse</li> <li>• High body temperature (above 103°F)</li> <li>• Confusion</li> <li>• Dizziness</li> <li>• Red, hot, dry, or damp skin</li> <li>• Throbbing headache</li> <li>• Nausea</li> <li>• Losing consciousness (passing out)</li> <li>• Altered mental state</li> <li>• Unconsciousness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>CALL 911 – this is a medical emergency</b></li> <li>• Reduce the person’s body temperature with whatever means you can - apply cool wet towels or cloths on the person, immerse them in a cool bath/shower, or spray them with cool hose water</li> <li>• Move them to a cool place</li> <li>• <b>Wait until clearance from a medical professional BEFORE you give them anything to drink</b></li> <li>• If there is uncontrollable muscle twitching, keep the person safe, but do not place any objects in their mouth</li> <li>• If there is vomiting, turn the person on their side to keep the airway open</li> </ul>	

The Department of Public Health’s Community Sanitation Program recommends this information be shared with all recreational camp or program staff and volunteers, including the on-site Health Care Supervisor(s). As always, thank you for your cooperation and assistance with this important public health matter.