

**Massachusetts Department of Public Health**

***Guidance for Implementing Regulation 105 CMR 432.000***

May 12, 2017

Based on Massachusetts General Law (M.G.L.) c. 111, §127A½, commonly referred to as “Christian’s Law”, and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health’s (Department) previously issued guidance on Christian’s Law, the Department has promulgated regulation 105 CMR 432.000: “Minimum Requirements for Personal Flotation Devices for Minor Children at Municipal and Recreational Programs and Camps”, effective May 5, 2017. The law and regulations only apply to swimming or diving areas at marine or freshwater beaches and explicitly exclude swimming pools, wading pools, and other artificial bodies of water. In addition, the Department is issuing this guidance document to support compliance with the regulation, to provide associated best practices and to help assist municipal and recreational programs and camps implementing provisions of the regulation.

According to M.G.L. c. 111, §127A½, all municipal and recreational programs and licensed camps must:

1. Determine each minor’s swimming ability prior to allowing participation in swimming activities;
2. Make available properly sized and snug fitting Type I, II, or III personal flotation devices (PFD)   
   to all minor children who have been determined to be a non-swimmer or at-risk swimmer; and
3. Accept a PFD provided by a parent or guardian of a minor for the minor to use while in attendance   
   at the program or camp.

**Swim Ability Determination:**

Christian’s Law, in part, requires that municipal and recreational programs and licensed camps determine each participating minor’s swimming ability, prior to or at the first swimming session, in order to identify and classify non-swimmers and at-risk swimmers. If municipal and recreational programs and licensed camps determine that all participants are assumed to be non-swimmers, and ensure properly fitting PFDs are available to all minors engaged in swimming activities within areas classified for non-swimmers, then swim tests are not required.

* Based on input from water safety professionals, individuals who do not meet criteria for a Red Cross Level 3 swim rating or a YMCA Minnow shall be classified as a “non-swimmer” and individuals who may or may not have met the criteria for a Red Cross Level 3 swim rating or the YMCA Minnow, but have been determined to have a physical, psychological, medical, or cognitive disability that could negatively impact his or her swimming ability, shall be classified as an “at-risk swimmer”.
* All minors, including program or camp participants, staff, volunteers, and Counselors in Training (CIT), need to be swim tested, at a minimum once per summer, to determine swimming ability.

* In accordance with the regulations, swim tests shall be conducted or overseen by a trained Certified Swim Instructor (CSI) that holds appropriate certifications from a nationally recognized swim instructor program, such as the American Red Cross (ARC) or the YMCA, or an equivalent certificate, as determined by the Department. A lifeguard maintaining current requirements as outlined in the regulations may also conduct swim tests as a Swim Assessor if they have previously observed one and participated in one annual swim test training conducted by a CSI.
* Swim testing needs to be conducted at the same or a comparable location to where the swimming activities will occur unless the municipal and recreational program or licensed camp provides dedicated lifeguards at the marine of freshwater beach where swimming will occur, in which case swim testing may be conducted at a swimming pool prior to the swimming activities.
* Swim tests must be conducted under close supervision and without the use of a PFD. If a parent or guardian provides a PFD for their child, the municipal and recreation program or licensed camp should confirm with the parent or guardian, prior to any swim testing, that this testing will be conducted without the use of the PFD.
* The Department has created the “Swim and Fit Test Model Documentation Form” as an option for the operators to document and track swim testing and PFD fit tests. The form provides for individualized documentation for each minor being swim and fit tested, or who has been provided a PFD from a parent or guardian, and is available on the Department’s website.

**Identifying Non-Swimmers and At-Risk Swimmers**

Non-swimmers and at-risk swimmers need to be identified whenever they are at a swimming or diving area, in accordance with 105 CMR 432.400(A)(8). Below are several examples of how municipal and recreational programs or licensed camps may choose to accomplish this:

* Providing colored wrist bands that are not easily transferred between each child to identify their swimming ability; or
* Providing non-toxic, waterproof, temporary tattoos with U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) certification for dyes/colorants and compliance with Consumer Product and Safety Commission (CPSC) and American Society of Testing Materials (ASTM) requirements;
* Temporary tattoos that are digitally printed (with computer inks) on temporary tattoo transfer paper and Henna-based temporary tattoos should not be used; or
* Any other method including swim markers designed with FDA compliant, toxic-free cosmetic ingredients which allows for an easy identification to differentiate between non-swimmers, at-risk swimmers and other classified swimmers;
* Alcohol-based skin ink hand stamps should not be used.

The identification process should be clearly outlined and documented in the municipal and recreational program or licensed camp’s policies and procedures.

**Confinement to Dedicated Swimming Areas**

Christian’s Law requires municipal and recreational programs and licensed camps to ensure all participants, including non-swimmers and at-risk swimmers that are either determined through a swim test or designated as such by the program or camp operator, as well as minors whose parents or guardians have provided a PFD for their child, be confined to swimming areas consistent with the limits of their swimming skills or to swimming areas requiring lesser skills than those for which they have been classified. All swimming areas shall be permitted and meet the requirements of regulation 105 CMR 445.000: Minimum Standards for Bathing Beaches (State Sanitary Code, Chapter VII).

* In order to properly identify confinement areas at the swimming site, the Department suggests that the municipal and recreational program or licensed camp operator create a waterfront site plan for identification and training purposes. This site plan should include all natural and artificial barriers and boundaries of the swimming or diving area, including but not limited to rocks, trees, drop-offs, buoys, ropes, docks, diving board platforms, and slides, which should clearly outline the areas in which specified swimmers, non-swimmers and at-risk swimmers have access. This site plan may be posted at the swimming or diving area, utilized as part of staff orientations, and maintained with other records in accordance with 105 CMR 432.000.

* Additionally, the Department suggests each municipal and recreational program and licensed camp consider implementing a “buddy system” for all minors who are participating in swimming or diving activities.
  + A buddy system is designed to pair or team-up two people, referred to as “buddies”, to stay together and be responsible for keeping track of each other, as well as let someone know if either needs assistance or can’t be located while at the waterfront. The buddies act as a single unit in order to monitor and help each other during swimming or diving activities.
  + Buddies should be teamed up based on similar swimming ability; it is not advisable to team up a swimmer with a non-swimmer or at-risk swimmer.
  + A “buddy check” should be performed approximately every 15 minutes. After a designated signal like blowing a whistle, all swimming or diving should stop and each minor then instructed to go to their established buddy, stand in the water, and hold their buddies hand high in the air while the lifeguard and other counselors ensure everyone is accounted for. Once the count is confirmed swimming or diving may resume.
* The Department recommends contacting marine beach operators to inquire about existing local bylaws, ordinances, or regulations prohibiting the use of PFDs due to water current, and undertow concerns, prior to scheduling any swimming activities.

**Ensuring PFDs are Made Available:**

Christian’s Law requires that municipal and recreational programs and licensed camps have a system in place to make PFDs available to non-swimmers and at-risk swimmers, and requires programs and camps to accept a PFD from a parent or legal guardian for their child to use when these programs or licensed camps conduct swimming or waterfront activities at fresh or saltwater beaches.

* Operators of municipal and recreational programs and licensed camps may maintain their own inventory of PFDs or have them provided by a beach operator, in which case the program operator must secure a written agreement for the amount and the condition of the PFDs.
* The PFDs should be accessible for staff to distribute to participants at or en-route to the swimming or diving area and only after a determination has been made on swimming ability.
* All PFDs, including those provided by a parent or guardian, need to be U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) certified according to type (I, II, III), size, and buoyancy, in serviceable condition and properly fitted to each individual prior to being used for the first time.
  + A PFD shall not have rips, tears, holes, visible mold or mildew odor, signs of waterlogging, damaged seams, straps or hardware, or any shrinkage or leaks in buoyant material.
  + All PFDs maintained on-site during the season should be stored in an area with adequate natural or mechanical ventilation, in order to ensure a proper drying process between use. Once the season is over, the PFDs should be thoroughly dried and then stored in an area where they are maintained dry until the following season.
  + The serviceable condition of each PFD must be inspected annually, preferably at the beginning or end of the season prior to off-season storage, however it is recommended that more frequent inspections are conducted with a procedure in place for properly disposing any that are not determined to be in serviceable condition.
  + Information on the types of PFDs, size selection, and tips for determining & maintaining a PFD in serviceable condition are available directly from the USCG website at:

**http://www.uscgboating.org/safety/life\_jacket\_wear\_wearing\_your\_life\_jacket.aspx**

[All spaces represent an underscore character “\_” in the website address.]

* When a PFD is used by a minor, either when one is provided by a program or camp or when one is dropped off by a parent or legal guardian, trained staff at municipal and recreational programs and licensed camps shall ensure the PFD is properly sized according to manufacturer’s guidelines for height and weight, securely fastened and assessed for a proper fit prior to each swimming activity.
* The Department recommends that all staff be trained for PFD fit testing by reviewing the short guidance video provided by the Department with assistance from the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary and Massachusetts Parks/Department of Conservation & Recreations. A link to the video can be found at the website below:

<http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/dph/programs/environmental-health/comm-sanitation/christians-law.html>

* Non-swimmers, at-risk swimmers, and participants whose parents or legal guardians have provided a PFD for their child and are aware of the conditions, do not need to wear a PFD during closely supervised swim tests, swimming lessons, and other closely supervised non-swimming beach waterfront activities, including wading in shallow water where the water depth is less than two feet; however a PFD should be worn for all other swimming activities, and whenever minors are on a dock. “Closely supervised,” non-swimming activities should be supervised by adults at a ratio of one adult for every five minors below age 7 and at a ratio of one to 10 for all minors age 7 and above.
* A PFD should never be worn during any diving activities.
* A participant should not be allowed to swim if a parent or guardian provides a PFD that does not fit properly or is not in serviceable condition and permission should be provided by the parent or guardian before an alternative PFD is issued.
* The Department has also created the “Regulation 105 CMR 432.000 – Guidance Checklist” which is available on the Department’s website, to assist all stakeholders with meeting the overall requirements of the regulations.

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For more information please visit the MDPH – Community Sanitation Program website **www.mass.gov/dph/dcs** or  
 contact the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Bureau of Environmental Health at **617-624-5757**.