

For Immediate Release

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PSA: Babies Aren't Waterproof! Illinois DCFS Reminds Parents and Caregivers to Constantly Supervise Children When Children are in or Near Water *20 Illinois children lost their lives to accidental drowning in 2023*

WHAT: According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), drowning is the leading cause of death for children ages 1 to 4 and the second leading cause of unintentional injury death for children ages 5 to 14. In 2023, 20 Illinois children lost their lives to accidental drowning: eight in pools, four in bathtubs, four in lakes, two in ponds, one in a washing machine and one at a water park. Thirteen of the children were age 5 and younger; including six of the children who drowned in pools. For every child who dies from drowning, another seven receive emergency department care for non-fatal submersion injuries.

WHY: During the summer when pools are open and lakes, ponds and other bodies of water are more accessible, there is an increase in water related deaths especially with children. The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) reminds parents and caregivers to constantly supervise children whenever they are near water, no matter their age or how well they can swim.

"It is easy to be lulled into a false sense of security when using devices such as floaties or baby bathtubs," **said Illinois DCFS Director Heidi E. Mueller.** "Children should never be left unattended. Whether at home or at events, family gatherings or vacations, it's very important to remember that children are naturally drawn to water – it's fun and entertains many senses. Keep your children safe by always keeping them in sight near water. Get waterwise...SUPERVISE!"

Illinois DCFS offers safety tips, brochures and posters in English, Spanish and Polish for parents, caregivers, individuals, pools and other water-related businesses to print and

share. Visit: <https://dcfs.illinois.gov> and click on Safe Kids > Health and Safety Tips for Children > [Water Safety](#).

Quick links:

- Get Waterwise...SUPERVISE! brochure: [English](#) [Spanish](#) [Polish](#)
- Babies aren't waterproof poster: [English](#) [Spanish](#) [Polish](#)

Follow these safety tips to help protect children and prevent water-related tragedy:

Bathrooms

- Never leave a young child alone in a bathtub or rely on a bathtub seat for safety.
- Secure the toilet lid. Curious toddlers could tip headfirst into a toilet, risking drowning.

Buckets

- Five-gallon buckets commonly used for household home-improvement projects pose a threat to babies and toddlers who may topple into them and be unable to get out.
- Empty and store all buckets out of children's reach when not in use.

Portable or inflatable pools

- Don't be lulled into a false sense of security because of the shallowness of baby pools.
- Empty the pool immediately after use and store it upside-down.

Swimming pools and hot tubs

- Keep ladders, patio furniture and toys away from above-ground pools.
- Install a four-sided fence with a self-closing, self-latching gate around all pools and spas.
- Keep the pool and deck clear of floats, balls and toys after you leave the pool.
- Young children can wear personal flotation devices, but do not be lured into thinking these are able to prevent drownings.
- Keep hot tubs securely covered when not in use. Children should not be left in a hot tub alone.
- Appoint an adult who can swim to always watch children when they are in the pool.
- Learn CPR and keep rescue equipment, a phone and emergency numbers by the pool. The American Red Cross offers [online CPR training classes](#) anyone can take at their own pace from the convenience of home.

Ponds, fountains and retention ponds

- Be aware of access to water hazards in your yard and neighborhood. If a child goes missing, check these areas first.

About the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) – Currently celebrating 60 years as the nation's first cabinet-level child welfare agency, DCFS is responsible for protecting children from abuse or neglect by responding to reports received by the Child Abuse Hotline 1-800-252-2873 (1-800-25-ABUSE) or childabuse.illinois.gov (non-emergency). With the goal of keeping children safe, DCFS strengthens and supports families with a wide range of services. In the event a child must be removed from the home, DCFS makes every effort to reunite them with their family. When the best interest of the child makes this impossible (less than 4% of the time), DCFS is committed to pursuing guardianship and fictive kin as primary options.