



Washington State  
Department of Social  
& Health Services

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## FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Trujillo Chris, DSHS Children's Administration, 360-902-0221

Dave Workman, DSHS Communications, 360-902-7828

## **Parents: Don't Let Youngsters Out of Your Sight When Swimming and Playing in Pools, Lakes, Rivers and Other Waterways**

**OLYMPIA** – As the summer holiday closes over Labor Day weekend, parents and caregivers should pay close attention to children swimming and playing in Washington's many lakes, rivers, salt water beaches or in backyard wading pools.

Nationwide, drowning is the leading cause of death among children ages 1 to 4, and is one of the top four causes of child death in Washington. And it can happen in only two inches of water.

“Many families head to Washington's parks, campgrounds and resorts to enjoy the last holiday before school starts and we want everyone to be safe,” said **Uma Ahluwalia**, assistant secretary for the state Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) Children's Administration.

“Adult supervision is the number one way to prevent a drowning tragedy,” she said. “It is important that parents stay within reach of younger children in the water, even if they are wearing a life vest or other floatation device.”

### **Water Safety Tips from DSHS**

DSHS offers the following tips to keep warm weather activities safe and fun:

- Never leave a child unsupervised in or near the water.
- Buy the child a life vest and insist that he or she wears it. But never solely rely on it or swimming lessons to protect a child.
- Avoid keeping buckets and other containers that can accumulate water where children can access them.
- Enclose pools and ponds.
- Empty the wading pool when not in use.
- Never allow children to dive in water less than nine feet deep or to dive in any area where the parent is unfamiliar with the water's depth or conditions beneath the surface.
- Learn how to perform CPR on infants and children.
- Heed warning signs, particularly along Washington's rivers and ocean coastline where changing tides and undertows can sweep a swimmer under the waves.
- Be aware of driftwood and other ocean debris that can easily knock a swimmer unconscious.
- Swim in designated areas where lifeguards are stationed.
- Teach children good swimming and safety habits at a young age.

## **DSHS Keep Them Safe Campaign**

Ahluwalia suggests that parents visit the DSHS online child safety guide. It is part of the department's Keep Them Safe Campaign, designed to reduce the number of accidental or preventable child deaths.

Workbooks, posters and brochures on water safety are available online at <http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/KeepSafe/index.html>

According to the state Department of Health (DOH) an average of 27 Washington children under the age of 18 drown each year, most in open water such as lakes, rivers, ponds or creeks. See the DOH [The Child Drowning Prevention Report](#) for more information.

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