

Promoting Swimming and Water Recreation

A Guide for Health Care Professionals and Organizations

Developed by Everyone Swims

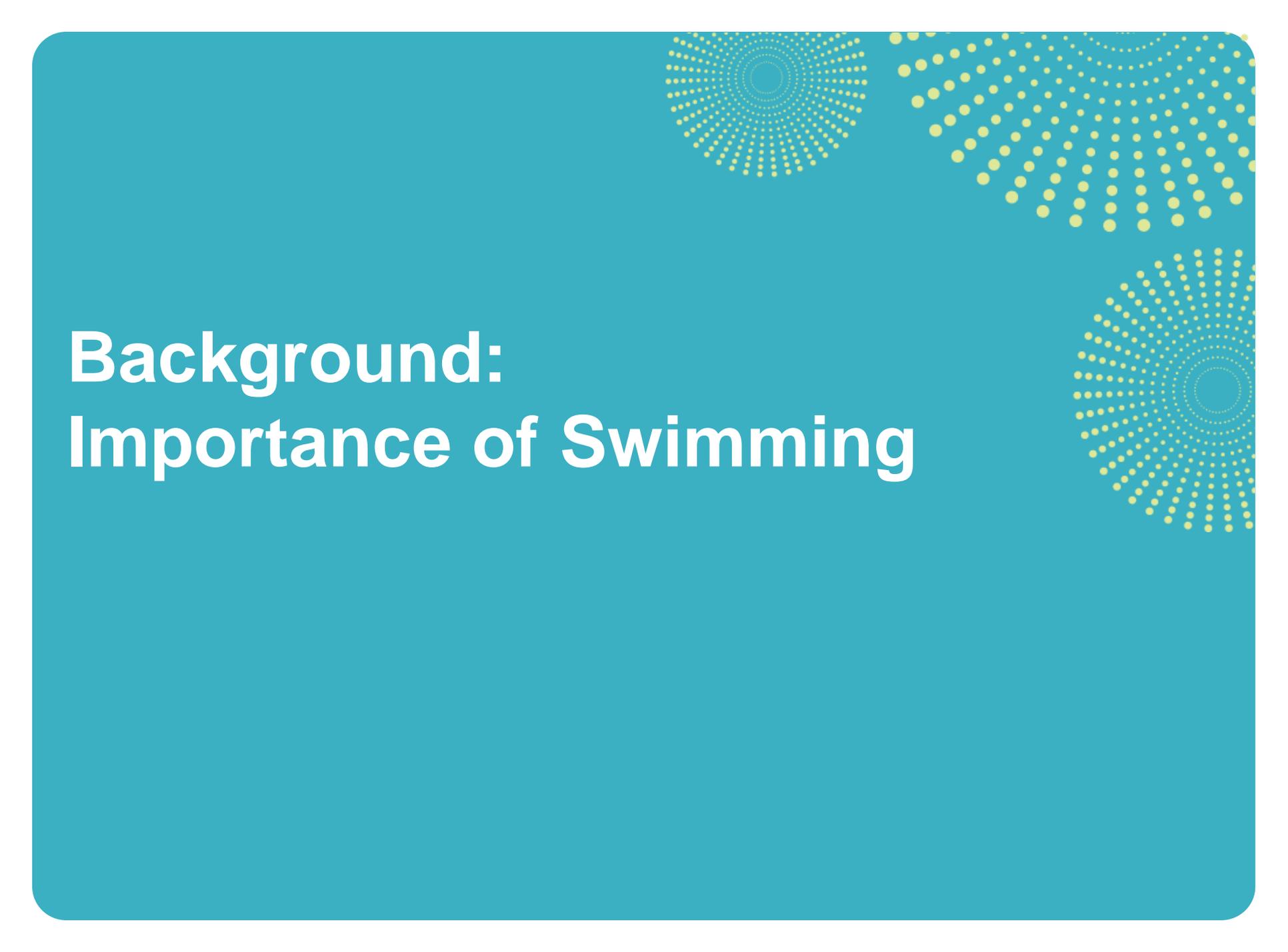


**Communities Putting
Prevention to Work**
Making healthy living easier.

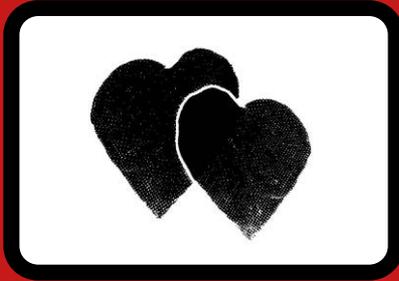
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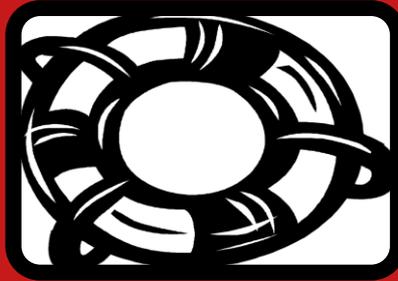
Background: Importance of Swimming



Learning to Swim Improves...



**Physical
Activity**



Safety



Equity

Physical Activity

- **The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends at least 60 minutes of physical activity a day; swimming is one option.¹**
- **The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that all children learn to swim by age 4. Swim lessons can be considered after age one and depends on the developmental level of the child and the environment.²**
- **Knowing how to swim creates opportunities for other water recreation (e.g. kayaking, rowing, and surfing) and jobs (e.g. lifeguard).**

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Fact sheet for health professionals on physical activity guidelines for children and adolescents. June, 2009. Available at: http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/physical/pdf/PA_Fact_Sheet_Children.pdf

2. American Academy of Pediatrics Policy Statement Prevention of Drowning. 2010.

Safety

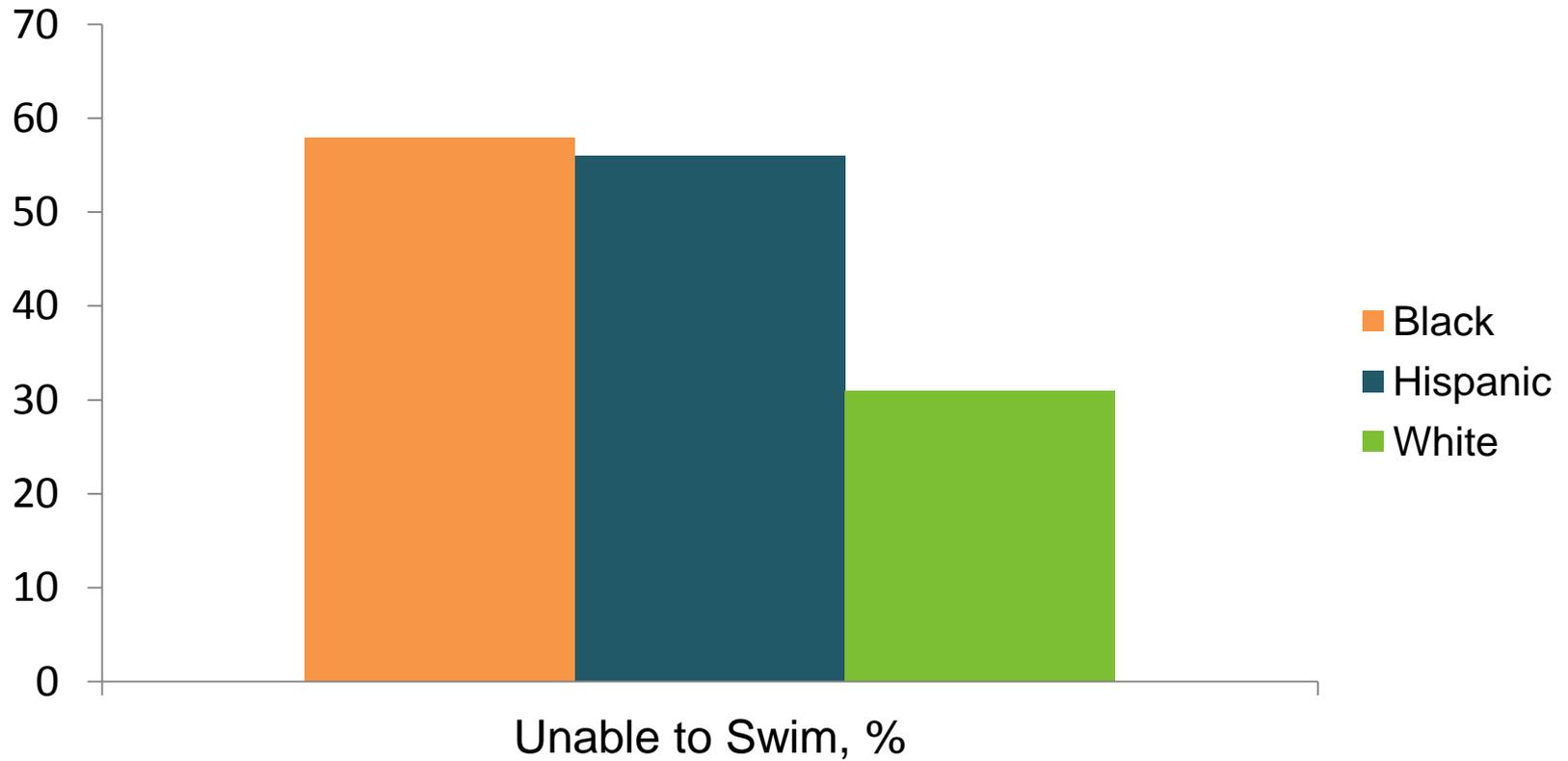
- **In Washington State, drowning is one of the leading causes of unintentional injury death among children and youth.**
- **85% of drowning fatalities occurred in open water (lakes, rivers, and ocean).¹**
- **Most drownings occurred while swimming and playing in or near the water.²**
- **Taking formal swimming lessons is associated with an 88% reduction in drowning risk.³**
- **Swimming lessons are an important step of many to prevent the risk of drowning, along with environmental modifications such as fencing, use of life jackets and lifeguards.**

1. Washington State Drowning News Clippings

2. Child Death Review 1999-2007

3. Brenner R, Taneja G, Haynie D, et al. The association between swimming lessons and drowning in childhood: a case-control study. *Arch Pediatr Adolesc Med.* 2009; 163(3):203–210.

Health Equity



1. Irwin, C.C., Irwin, R.L., Ryan, T.D., Drayer, J. Urban minority youth swimming (in)ability in the United States and associated demographic characteristics: Toward a drowning prevention plan. *Injury Prevention*, 2009, 15: 234-239.



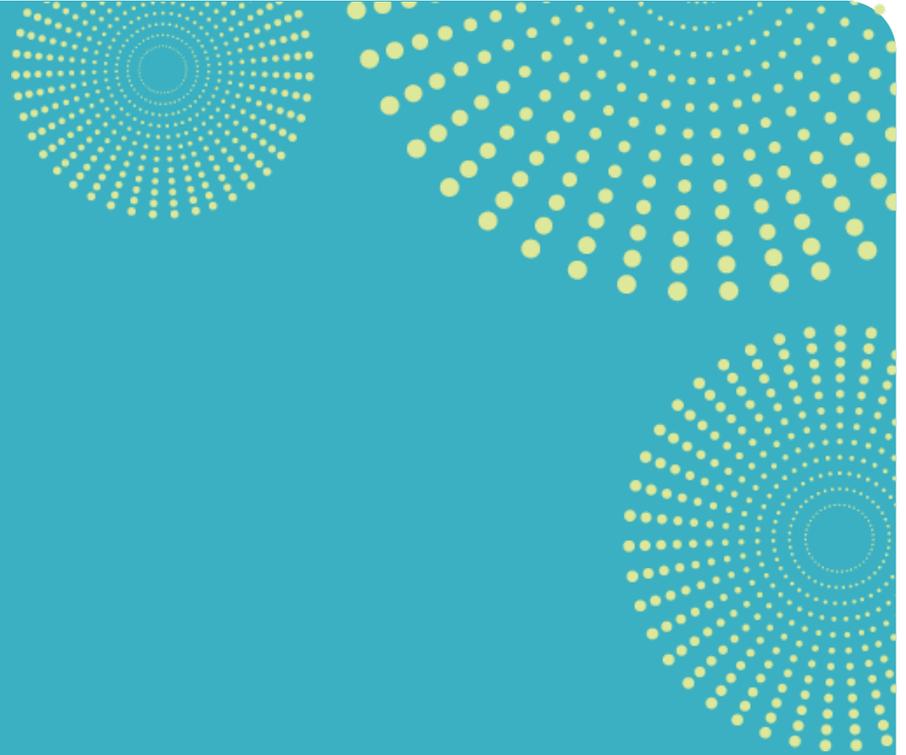
Health Care Professionals: Your Role in Swimming

Promoting Swimming

Health care professionals have a unique opportunity to promote swimming. Here are steps you can take in your health care organization to promote swimming:

- **Assess** for swimming ability, interest, and barriers
- **Encourage** learning to swim
- **Refer** families to local pools for swim lessons

Assess



Swimming Assessment

We recommend health care professionals assess for:

- **Safety**
- **Physical activity**
- **Swimming ability**
- **Barriers to swimming**

In this section we provide examples of questions you may want to ask families and encourage you to tailor questions to your families and your organization.

Sample Questions: Safety and Physical Activity

Safety

Learning to swim is especially important if a person has regular exposure to pools, rivers, lakes, beaches, and ponds. Regular exposure to recreational water can put a person at risk for drowning if s/he doesn't know how to swim. Here are some questions you can ask:

1. Are there lakes, rivers, beaches, or pools near your home?
2. How often does your family go to lakes, rivers, or beaches?
3. How often does your family go to a pool?

Physical Activity

Learning to swim may be a fun physical activity for some youth and families. Here are some questions you can ask:

- 1a. What type of physical activity does <name> do?
- 1b. Has s/he tried swimming?
- 2a. What type of physical activity do you do as a family?
- 2b. Has your family tried swimming?

Sample Questions: Swimming Ability

Swimming Ability

Asking about swimming ability is helpful. Sometimes people will say they know how to swim, but haven't had formal swimming lessons and can't pass a swim competency test that allows them to swim in the deep end of a pool. Here are some questions you can ask:

- 1a. Has <name> learned to swim?
- 1b. What type of swim lessons did <name> have?
2. Can <name> swim from one end of the pool to the other end?
3. Can <name> swim or float for 10 minutes in the deep end of a pool without touching the bottom or grabbing on to the side?

Sample Questions: Barriers

Barriers: Learning to Swim

There are many factors that may influence a person's decision to learn to swim. The following are a few examples: Parent/caregiver inability to swim; fear of water; cultural beliefs about swimming; concerns about water cleanliness; ability to pay for lessons, pool fees, and swimming accessories (e.g. swimsuit); language differences; and discomfort with/inability to participate in co-ed swimming. Here are some questions you can use to help you identify barriers:

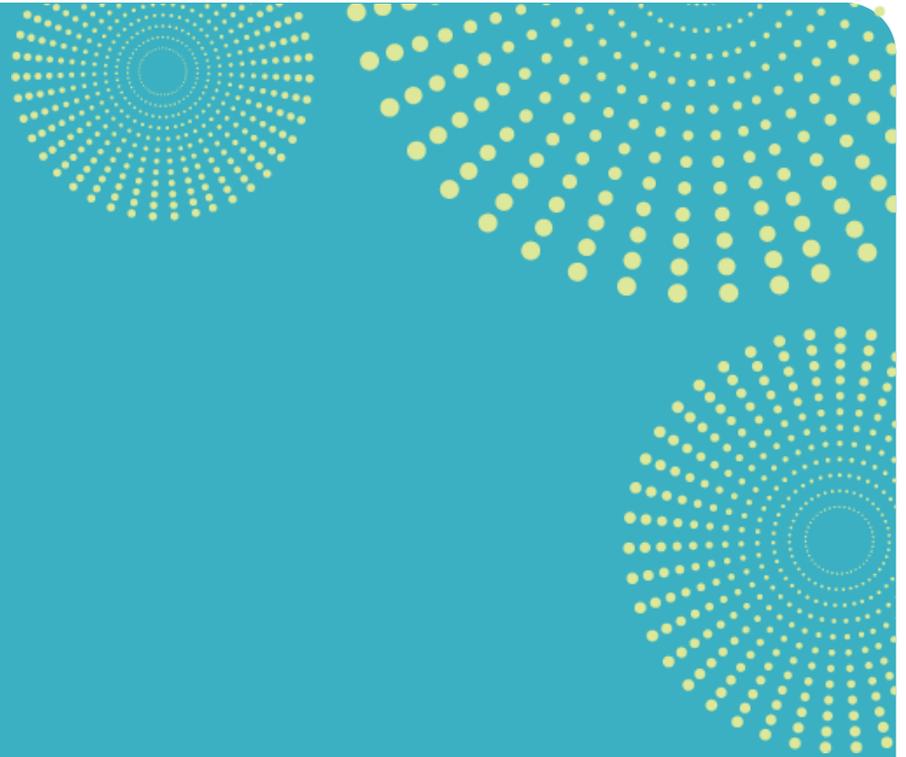
- 1a. What makes it hard for <name> to learn to swim?
- 1b. What would make it easier for <name> to swim?)
- 2a. What makes it hard for your family to learn to swim?
- 2b. What would make it easier for your family to learn to swim?

Checklist

These are steps you can take to make swim assessments a routine part of your health care organization:

- Add a swimming assessment question to your:
 - Electronic Health Record (EHR)
 - Electronic Medical Record (EMR)
 - Paper-Based Screening (e.g. well-child checkup questionnaire)
- Recommend swimming at 4 year well-child checkups and follow-up at 5 and 6 year well-child checkups.
- Assess parent/caregiver/family swim ability.

Encourage



Encouraging Swimming

In this section, we've provided key messages to help you start a conversation that encourages learning to swim. Here are some tips on how to effectively use the key messages:

- After listening to a family during the swimming assessment, think about what will motivate their interest in learning to swim.
- Tailor the key messages to the families unique interest, experiences, and barriers.

Key Messages for Families

Safety

- a. Learning how to swim is important for your safety. Knowing how to swim can keep you safe in and around pools, beaches, lakes, rivers, and ponds.
- b. Knowing how to swim helps protect kids from drowning. Swimming at beaches and pools with lifeguards, adults watching kids around water, and wearing a life jacket also protect kids from drowning.
- c. Kids, teens, and adults can learn to swim at pools and beaches with lifeguards and teachers.

Physical Activity

- a. Doctors recommend that kids be active (play sports, walk, etc) for at least an hour a day to stay healthy. Swimming is one option.

Key Messages for Families

Fun

- a. Many families like to swim together. Pools have family swim times and swim lessons.
- b. When you know how to swim, you can do other water activities like kayaking and surfing.
- c. Being a lifeguard is a popular summer job for teens. Knowing how to swim can help <name> get a summer lifeguard job at a local pool, beach, or water park.
- d. Many teens go to beaches, lakes and rivers. When <name> becomes a teen, s/he might go there with friends. <Name> might be embarrassed if s/he can't swim and might not tell his/her friends.

Swim Lessons

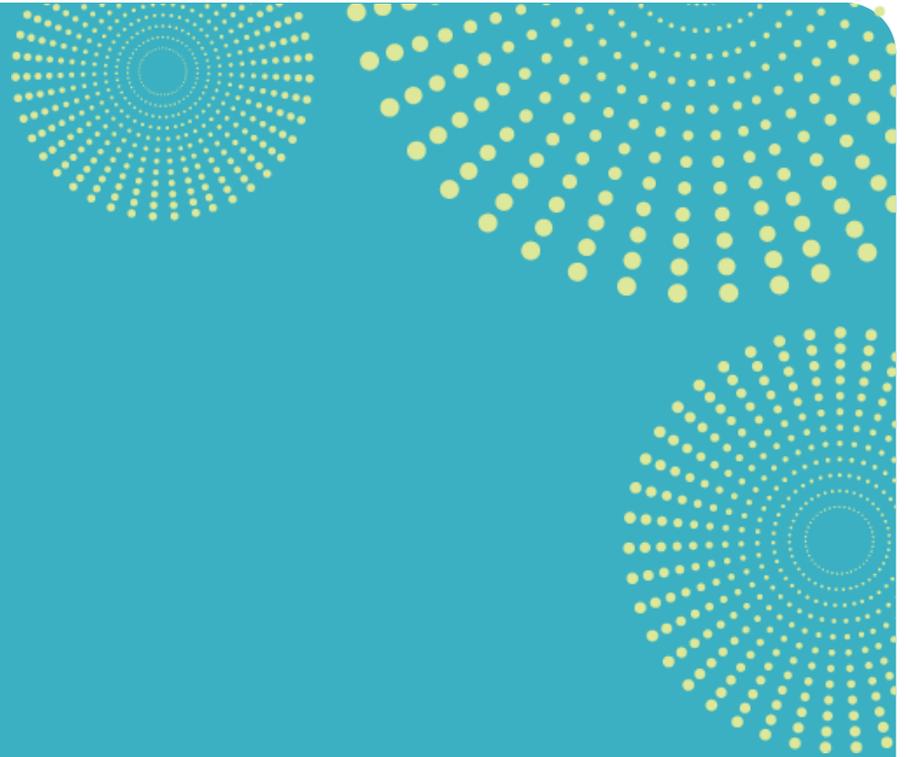
- a. Many pools have reduced fees and scholarships to help you pay for swimming.
- b. Many pools have different types of classes. Check with <local pool> to learn about gender-only swims, family swims, water exercise, and other types of swim lessons.

Checklist

These are steps you can take to make encouraging swimming a routine part of your health care organization:

- Make swimming and water recreation handouts available in waiting rooms and exam rooms.
- Give swimming and water recreation handouts to patients.
- Give registration and scholarship application forms to patients.
- Assist families with filling out registration and scholarship application forms.

Refer



Referring to Swim Lessons

Health care professionals have a special opportunity to refer youth, adults, and families to swimming lessons. We recommend that you partner with 1 or more local pools in the community to:

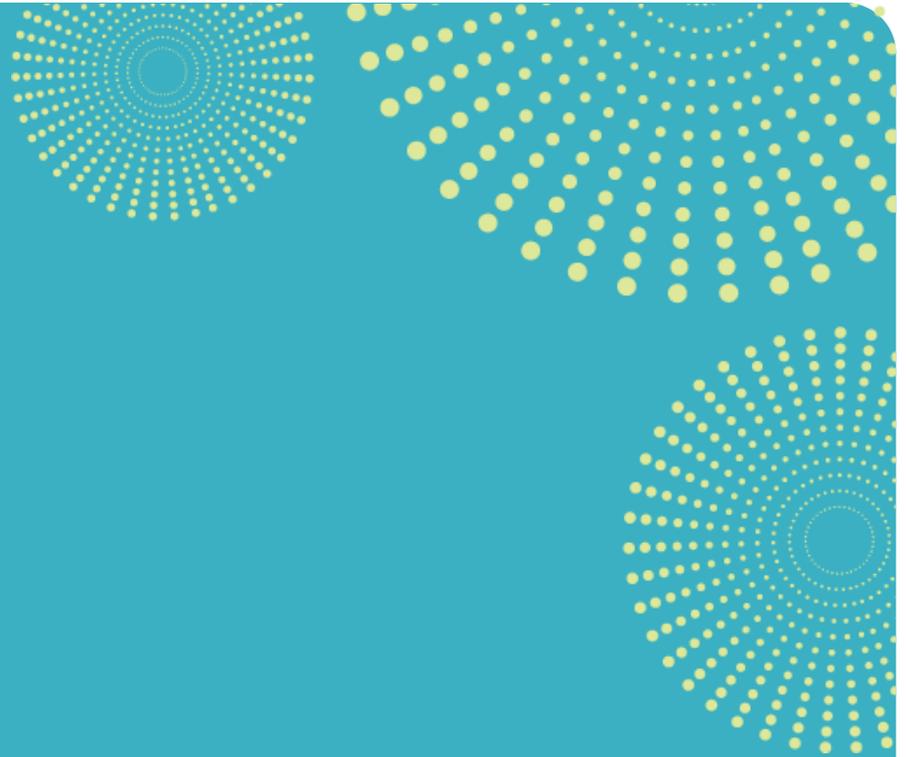
- Provide information on pool swimming classes.
- Tailor the key messages to the families unique interest, experiences, and barriers.

Checklist

These are steps you can take to make referrals to swimming a routine part of your health care organization:

- Identify 1 or more local pools to partner with.
- Develop a referral system between organization and pool (e.g. fax or e-mail referrals to swimming).
- Partner with a local pool to host an “open house” event for families to become familiar with the pool and swimming.

Resources



Everyone Swims Tools and Resources

<http://www.seattlechildrens.org/dp>

Everyone Swims

- Complete List of Policy and Systems Change Priorities
- Stakeholder Needs Assessment
- Families Needs Assessment

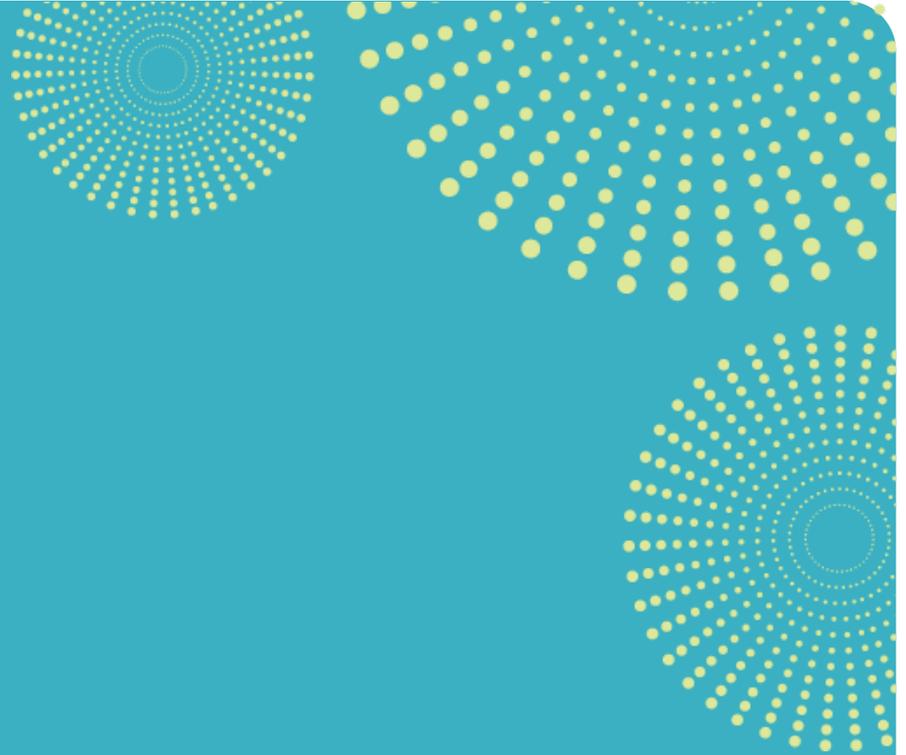
Screening

- Screening and Referral Pocket Card
- Screening for Health Care Providers – PowerPoint
- Partner Examples

Referrals

- Swimming and Water Recreation in Seattle, South King, and East King (includes Google Maps)
- Sample Job Description
- Partner Examples

Thanks!



Acknowledgements

Thanks to our water and clinic partners, community partners, and project team for their commitment to the health and safety of youth and families:

Water and Clinic Partners

Columbia Health Center, Covington Aquatic Center, Evergreen Pool, George Pocock Rowing Foundation, Harborview Children's Clinic, HealthPoint, International Community Health Services, Issaquah Pool, Kent Meridian Pool, Mt Rainier Pool, Neighborcare Health, Odessa Brown Children's Clinic, Orca Swim School, Resident Champions from the WA Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, Roxbury Clinic, Sea Mar Community Health Centers, Seattle Parks and Recreation, YMCA of Greater Seattle

Community Partners

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Acknowledgments

Thanks to our health clinic, pool, and water recreation partners for their commitment to the health and safety of children and families:

Columbia Health Center

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Evergreen Pool

George Pocock Rowing Foundation

Harborview Children's Clinic

HealthPoint

International Community Health Services

Issaquah Pool

Kent Meridian Pool

Mt Rainier Pool

NeighborCare Health

Odessa Brown Children's Clinic

Orca Swim School

Roxbury Clinic

Sea Mar Community Health Centers

Seattle Parks and Recreation

YMCA of Greater Seattle