



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: December 8, 2020

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Learning to Swim Deemed Essential in California

COVID-19 restrictions in CA now include language deeming swim lessons essential

Cave Creek, AZ: The United States Swim School Association (USSSA) has announced that drowning prevention classes, including swim lessons have been deemed essential by the California Department of Public Health (CDPH). This designation will help greatly in the continued mission to prevent drownings in the state of California. Learning to swim is a critical tool, as part of a multilayer drowning prevention plan, as demonstrated by a study conducted in 2009 showing that formal swim lessons between the ages of 1 and 4 can help reduce the risk of drowning by 88%.¹

Each year in California hundreds of children suffer drowning incidents. For every fatal drowning, there are five other drowning incidents that end in victim resuscitation and brain injury due to hypoxia.

We understand and accept the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic requires the state and local health departments to be vigilant, in order to flatten the curve and prevent the continuation of COVID's hold on the landscape. Leaders and partners in the drowning prevention community, including the California Coalition for Children's Safety and Health (CCCSH) leadership, agree that drowning prevention is just as important and can be done safely, even during this pandemic. Drowning is the leading cause of unintentional death for the one-to-four-year-old population, and one of the leading causes of unintentional death for the teen and youth population.²

"As we work together to reduce the spread of COVID-19, we must also continue to carry out public health activities that prevent children from fatal accidents or being permanently harmed by preventable unintentional injuries such as drowning," says Lisa Zarda, Executive Director at USSSA. "We cannot and should not ignore the importance of drowning prevention as an essential public health need in California, and we applaud leadership at the CDPH for recognizing this and deeming drowning prevention, including swim lessons, as essential."

This news also comes in the wake of recent studies and initiatives developed by USSSA to make learning to swim as safe as possible during COVID-19, including:

- Creation of a uniform manual, USSSA Action Plan 2.1, that is based on the Center for Disease Control (CDC) protocols to provide guidance for swim schools to open and continue to provide critical water safety and drowning prevention for children while maintaining everyone's health and safety.
- Surveys of USSSA member swim schools operating across the country, with our most recent survey showing nearly 44,600 students and staff participating in swim lessons for an average of three months with no

¹ Association Between Swimming Lessons and Drowning in Childhood, A Case-Control Study: Ruth Brenner, et al., 2009
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4151293/>

² <https://www.aap.org/en-us/about-the-aap/aap-press-room/campaigns/drowning-prevention/Pages/default.aspx>

COVID-19 transmissions to students in the facility, thus demonstrating that the numerous health and safety measures put in place by swim schools are working.

- Uncovering important information from industry experts on the various ways ventilation for indoor pools are far superior at minimizing virus transmission than most indoor spaces.³

Lisa shares, “We are pleased to see leadership in California recognize the importance of drowning prevention as a significant public health initiative and will work with our volunteers and experts to continue to educate leadership in other states to follow suit, make drowning prevention, including learning to swim, essential in every state in the country.”

To learn more about California’s COVID-19 restrictions and the essential designation, visit <https://covid19.ca.gov/stay-home-except-for-essential-needs/> and look under the Outdoor Recreation, “Are swimming pools open?” section.

About US Swim School Association

US Swim School Association (USSSA) began in 1988 and has become the largest, preeminent swim school association in the country. Swim schools receive invaluable benefits as USSSA members, receiving the latest training in water safety, swim instruction methods and tools, as well as and many other benefits that help establish and build each individual business. For more information, visit www.usswimschools.org.

³ <https://www.usswimschools.org/2020/10/lets-talk-air/>