



# **May Is Childhood Drowning Prevention Month: Illinois DDFS Reminds Parents To Remain Vigilant When Children Are In Or Near Water**

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CHICAGO— Governor JB Pritzker has proclaimed May Childhood Drowning Prevention Month in Illinois, which serves as a good time to remind parents of the importance of constantly supervising children when they are in or near water to prevent the tragedy of accidental drowning deaths.

In 2021, 18 Illinois children lost their lives to accidental drowning: eight in pools; three in bathtubs; two in lakes; two in ponds; and one each in a creek, a river, and a hot tub. All eight of the children who drowned in pools were age 5 and younger.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), drowning is the leading cause of unintentional death for children ages 1 to 4 and the second leading cause of unintentional death for children ages 1 to 14. For every child who dies from drowning, another eight receive emergency department care for non-fatal drowning.

“A child can drown in seconds, in silence, and in as little as one inch of water,” said Illinois DCFS Director Marc D. Smith. “We can prevent the tragedy of childhood drowning by actively watching our children any time they are in or around water and practicing ‘reach supervision so an adult is always just an arm’s reach away from children in the water.’”

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.
- Don’t allow children to play alone in the bathroom.

## **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. A child can drown in as little as one inch of water.
- Empty the pool right after use and store it upside-down.

## **Swimming pools and hot tubs**

- Keep ladders, patio furniture, and toys away from above-ground pools. Toddlers are better climbers than you think!
- Install a four-sided fence with a self-closing, self-latching gate around all pools and spas. Always check to make sure the gate is locked or closed when leaving the pool or spa!
- Keep the pool and deck clear of floats, balls, and toys after you leave the pool
- Young children should wear personal flotation devices, but they do not replace adult supervision.
- 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!

For more information and water safety resources, including posters, brochures, and a coloring book for children, visit the DCFS website at [www2.illinois.gov/DCFS](http://www2.illinois.gov/DCFS) and click on Safe Kids > Health and Safety Tips for Children > Water Safety.

*About the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Founded in 1964, DCFS is responsible for protecting children from abuse or neglect by responding to calls received on the Child Abuse Hotline, 1-800-25-ABUSE (1-800-252-2873). With the goal of keeping children safe, DCFS strengthens and supports families with a wide range of services. When keeping a child-safe means removing them from the home, DCFS makes every effort to reunite them with their family. When the best interest of the child makes this impossible, DCFS is committed to pursuing adoption by loving families to provide children with a safe and permanent home. DCFS is also responsible for licensing and monitoring all Illinois child welfare agencies.*