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For Immediate Release

DuPage County Health Department Urges Residents to Protect Swimmers Over the Upcoming Independence Day Weekend

DUPAGE COUNTY—This Independence Day weekend, DuPage County Health Department (DCHD) calls upon residents to protect young children and swimmers from outdoor water hazards. The need is urgent. Tragically, 18 Illinois children fatally drowned in 2021. Since March of 2021, three adults from Illinois drowned while rescuing young swimmers who could not swim in deep open water.

Across the nation, drowning continues to be the leading cause of unintentional death for children under the age of five and the second leading cause for children ages 1-14 years. Child drownings are more likely to occur in the evenings between 6-8 pm and on the weekends.

Young children ages five and younger are more likely to drown in backyard pools. Older children and teens are more likely to drown in open water including rivers and lakes. 80% of drownings occur among boys. Drowning rates are higher among children who are Hispanic/Latinx and African American. There are many contributors to this disparity including lack of access to aquatic environments and swim instruction.

Drownings happen quickly and silently; however, they are preventable by following simple steps. First, children should be taught how to swim and to self-rescue. Infant, child, adult, group, and adapted swim and self-rescue lessons are offered at Illinois swimming pools year-round. Scholarships for swim instruction are available to families. Children of all ages must be taught not to enter the water unless a focused adult ‘Water Watcher’ is within arm’s reach. Second, make sure the pools and hot tubs you use have compliant suction outlet drain covers. Swimmers should keep their bodies, fingers and toes, hair, and straps away from suction outlets in pools and hot tubs. Third, prevent children from accessing the water by installing door alarms, pool motion sensors, and four to five-foot fencing around all four sides of swimming pools and spas. These barriers are especially important if a home’s back door opens to a pool or hot tub. Together, we can prevent child drowning and protect swimmers. Visit dupagehealth.org for more information.

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Established in 1945, DuPage County Health Department promotes physical and emotional health; prevents illness injury and disability; protects health from environmental risk factors, and strives to assure the provision of accessible, quality service.