California Water Safety Strategy 2023

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In April of this year the California Water Safety Strategy was released to the public. It is the result of 2 years of meetings and hundreds of hours of collaboration with many safety advocates throughout California. This significant achievement foreshadowed the U.S. National Water Safety Action Plan that was released in June of 2023. Both groups utilized some of the same state and national experts (including the AAP), who led the way in developing a framework for drowning prevention. Both the Strategy and Action Plan were modeled from international plans with the same goal to reduce drowning.

All pediatricians are aware of the impact drowning plays for 1-4-year-olds. It is the number one killer in that age group from unintentional injuries. It is not only a pediatric issue since all age groups are affected. We **Californians** experience 400 deaths annually, and 1,200 hospitalizations and emergency room visits from non-fatal drowning incidents in all ages.

Water safety advocates believe that there would be value to network with like minded individuals and organizations. It was that intention that led to workshops and summits that followed from a core group of water safety advocates to build this California Coalition. The California Water Safety Coalition continues to operate as a non-profit to educate the people on the front line of advocacy and interventions.

The Strategy plans to be a foundation for evolving methods and outlines for drowning prevention. The hope is that individuals and organizations might refer to it to recognize and address water injuries wherever they may happen.

There are 8 priorities at the forefront in the Strategy document with workgroups to address each priority.

Priority 1: **Public significance** has the goal to elevate drowning prevention and water safety as an issue of public significance.

Priority 2: **Data** has the goal to establish and communicate valid, timely, and accessible information on the burden of drowning.

Priority 3: **Everyone a Swimmer** has the goal to ensure that everyone can learn skills to be safer in and around the water.

Priority 4: **Safety at All Ages** has the goal to ensure resources, programs, and competencies exist for all life stages across the age and developmental spectrum.

Priority 5: **Pools** has the goal to improve safety at pools in California.

Priority 6: **Open Water** has the goal to improve safety at the coast, lakes, rivers, canals, and other open bodies of water in California.

Priority 7: **Lifeguards** has the goal to create sustainable and adaptable systems for lifeguards in California.

Priority 8: **Water Emergency Preparedness** has the goal to ensure individuals and systems are prepared to prevent and respond to drowning incidents and community level water-related disasters.

This 43 page document has much more to offer anyone interested. For more information on the Strategy and the California Water Safety Coalition please see the document and download it. *For specific information or any interest to work with the **Coalition**, you can reach out to info@cawatersafety.org. If you would like to see what we have been doing since 1983 at the Water Safety Council of Fresno County or a specific question to me as Chair of the Council and Board member of the Coalition look to www.watersafe.org, watersafeinfo@gmail.com, or reach me through the Chapter 1office. Stay Safe.*