

## CREATING A WATER SAFETY PLAN FOR THE U.S. IS A BIG TASK. WE ARE READY FOR THE CHALLENGE.

This marks the 10th quarterly newsletter since development of the U.S. National Water Safety Action Plan (USNWSAP) began. In this issue, we would like to acknowledge everyone who has contributed and what has been accomplished. We also address some anticipated comments, concerns, and critiques of this evolving, living document. The challenge of changing the culture of water safety in the U.S. will be eased if we are all rowing in the same direction from the time the plan is launched.

**“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.” Margaret Mead**

The strength of the USNWSAP is the accumulated knowledge and expertise of those who participated in the development. Thank you. The future success of the plan depends on the commitment of individuals and organizations to work together to advocate for change, implement the recommendations, and measure results.

## Water safety in the United States is driven by the passion and commitment of people like you.

- If you are working in the water safety field, thank you.
- If you shared your expertise during the development of the USNWSAP, thank you.
- If you share water safety information in your community, with the media, and on social media, thank you.
- If you attend conferences and do research, thank you.
- If you teach swimming and water safety, work as a lifeguard, are a first responder, or are a medical professional, thank you.
- If you have shared your personal story, thank you.

You are key to creating a culture of water safety in the United States. You are key to ending drowning.

## USNWSAP

- 1 Project Manager
- 4 Countries who shared their experiences in developing a national plan
- 9 Steering Committee Members
- 17 national organizations working together as Water Safety USA
- 27 Blue Ribbon Panel Members
- 80+ Subject Matter Experts consulted
- 84 Working Group Members
- 175 Organizations from 40 states responded to the recommendation survey
- 389 Subscribers to the Newsletter
- 393 Individuals from 48 states responded to the recommendation survey

## DEVELOPING THE PLAN

Evidence-informed. Stakeholder-driven. Integrity. Eliminate bias. Sustainable. Transparency.

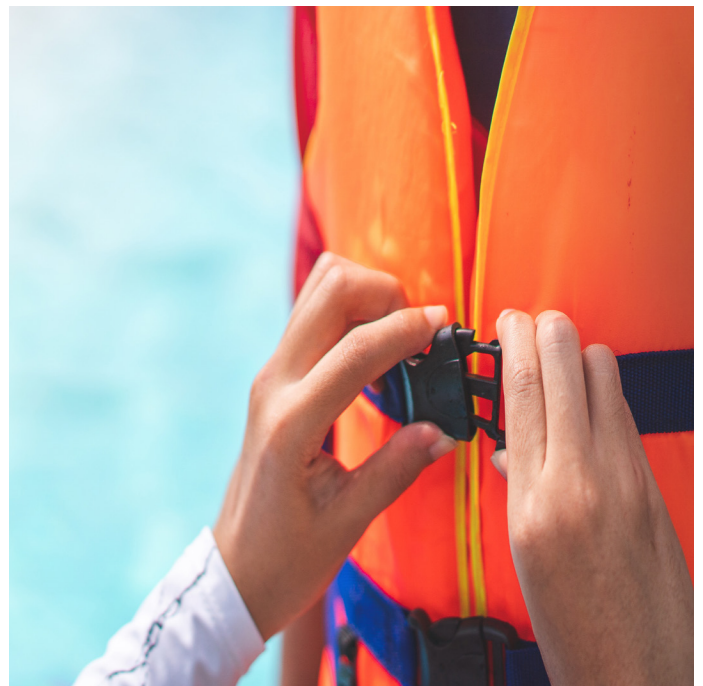


Photo courtesy of Adobestock



Photo courtesy of Adobestock

These are the standards to which the USNWSAP has been held over the four-year development period. Every decision has passed through these filters. The process for developing the USNWSAP was rigorous and extensive, with every effort made to engage a wide range of stakeholders through Working Groups, engaging experts, the Blue Ribbon Panel, public surveys, newsletters, and social media engagement.

Development of the USNWSAP took longer than anticipated. While the pandemic slowed progress, much of the delay was due to our commitment to engage as many experts as possible, create a highly defensible process for developing recommendations, and ensuring the final recommendations were evidence-informed and/or reflected standard practices, as defined by experts in the field. We believe the forthcoming USNWSAP accurately and respectfully reflects the expertise and integrity that went into development.

## ADDRESSING CONCERNS

A key section of the Implementation Plan will No plan is perfect. We heard the following concerns. “You left us out of the process.” “You’ve ignored our unique setting.” “You’re not teaching what is needed.” “You don’t have our expertise.” “My specific recommendation was not included.”

These concerns are valid and correct. Despite our efforts to engage diverse at risk groups, the many settings and scenarios in which drownings occur, the full range of recommendations is unlikely to fit in everyone’s unique setting perfectly. **Our goal is that Recommendations are written in such a way that they can be interpreted for each setting while remaining evidence-informed and building a path towards a consistent approach to water safety across the country.** Adapting delivery of the recommended actions to your unique audience will be necessary. Understanding products available in your area, for your community, at various

price points is key. Interpreting the recommendations using your expertise, as it applies to your local situation, will be critical. For this reason, we will be providing supplemental materials so that each person who picks up the plan can identify and implement appropriate evidence-informed recommendations for their area and audience.

Our greatest challenge is the sheer size and complexity of both the country and the people. We are one country, but we have 50 independent state governments, 14 territories plus Washington D.C., and over 3,000 counties - all with individual laws and ordinances. Our geography encompasses every type of water risk. No state is untouched by drowning. We often associate drowning with sandy beaches and hot weather, but Alaska has the highest rate of drowning.

The U.S. has a land mass of 3.797 million miles, we border two oceans. 7% of our territory is covered with water. The U.S. has the third largest supply of freshwater in the world, including the Great Lakes, which alone hold 21% of the Earth's fresh water.

We are a nation of over 332 million people speaking between 350 and 430 languages, making the U.S. one of the most linguistically diverse nations on Earth. The top 10 languages spoken are English, Spanish, Chinese Mandarin, Tagalog, Vietnamese, French, Arabic, Korean, Russian, and German.

We contrast these numbers to the relatively small group of people who have dedicated their lives and their careers to reducing drowning in the U.S. We are in awe of what has been accomplished by so few people, with so little money, for so many years.

## THE WAY FORWARD

Despite all the input and hours of output, we know that the final plan is incomplete; it is just the beginning. However, we are excited that the more than one hundred participants found enough common ground to communicate and implement evidence-informed recommendations across the country. This first effort, if realized, will make a significant dent in fatal and non fatal drowning numbers. The upcoming launch of the USNWSAP represents the first opportunity where all the amazing water safety work currently being done by so many is recognized by the American people, by policy-makers, by legislators, by philanthropists. We look forward to and welcome constructive debate and discussion so that the field can be united in public support of the first USNWSAP.

As the plan launches, we encourage you to share our concerns, and compliments, with us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/USWaterSafetyPlan> or Twitter at @USWaterSafetyP1 or at [info@watersafetyusa.org](mailto:info@watersafetyusa.org). Your voice will continue to impact the supporting materials, communications plan, and implementation plan.

## NEW RESEARCH

### Caregiver Supervision:

Schwebel DC, Ramos W, Gilchrist J, et al. Expanding the Concept of Caregiver Supervision to Prevent Child Drowning. *Pediatrics*. 2023; 151(3):e2022060240

### Pandemic Drowning Rate Increases:

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0022437522000883>

# WE NEED YOU!

Your involvement makes a difference in creating a culture of water safety in the U.S.

Please download and share this newsletter by clicking here for the pdf. We also hope you'll visit our website at [www.watersafetyusa.org](http://www.watersafetyusa.org).

[www.watersafetyusa.org/nwsap](http://www.watersafetyusa.org/nwsap), like our page

and follow us on Facebook at:

<https://www.facebook.com/USWaterSafetyPlan>

and follow us on Twitter at:

[@USWaterSafetyP1](https://twitter.com/USWaterSafetyP1).