

U.S. NATIONAL **WATER SAFETY** ACTION PLAN

DECEMBER 2020

CREATING A WATER SAFETY PLAN FOR THE US IS A BIG TASK. WE ARE READY FOR THE CHALLENGE.

The World Health Organization recommends that all countries create a Water Safety Plan which addresses the nation's drowning problem. To date, the United States has not had such a plan, but that is about to change. With the support of Water Safety USA, a Steering Committee has been formed to guide the development of just such a plan.

In this first newsletter, we'll bring you up to date on the progress that has been made, outline next steps, and highlight the work of two of our Working Groups. Creating a culture of water safety in the U.S. will take all of us. We look forward to working with you to create a water-tight plan, and to implement the plan on local, state, and national levels. We encourage you to share this information with your friends and colleagues in the water safety field.

Phase 1

Phase 1 involved developing a framework and approach. During this stage, six focus areas were identified: data/public health surveillance; supervision/lifeguards; water safety/water competence/swimming lessons; rescue/CPR; barrier, entrapment, and electrical safety; and life jackets/personal flotation devices and other flotation. Working Groups were formed for each focus area with the mandate to make recommendations for what a model "Water Safety State", "Water Safety County" and "Water Safety Community" should look like, as well as identifying where national level work on minimum standards and guidelines will help support states, counties and communities in adopting and implementing the recommended evidence-based strategies. You can read more about each Working Group and the co-chairs at [our website](#).

Phase 2

During Phase 2, the Working Groups established their scope of inquiry and identified where Sub-Working Groups were needed. The primary goal of Phase 2 was to brainstorm and prioritize every possible line of inquiry. An emphasis was placed on identifying areas of overlap between Working Groups and capturing the full range of decision-mapping to guide future inquiry. A priority during the process is to establish publicly-available resources which will aid in the implementation of the Plan, and guide future research and

programming as water safety becomes more widely acknowledged across the U.S. through our collective efforts. These resources will include an online library and a glossary of terminology. We are committed to transparency, consistency, and research and best-practice based recommendations and the outcome of Phase 2 will soon be available on the [website](#).

Phase 3

We are in the early stages of Phase 3, Conducting an Environmental Scan and Gaps Analysis. This phase involves casting a wide-angle lens on each area of inquiry to determine the "lay of the land". To ensure that inquiries are comprehensive and unbiased, a checklist of 29 items has been compiled. Working Groups will be cross-referencing this list, broken down by existing status, special considerations, gaps, and barriers. In addition, Working Groups will be documenting evidence-based solutions from literature and experts in a single resource document. This large task is on target to be complete by March 2021.



Photo courtesy of the YMCA of the USA

WORKING GROUP FOCUS AREAS

Data/Public Health Surveillance - Focus on what is needed to develop comprehensive drowning data surveillance to inform prevention of fatal and nonfatal drownings.

Supervision/Lifeguards - Focus on how to improve protection and supervision of those near and in all types of open waters, pool, and around the home by parents, group leaders and lifeguards.

Water Safety/Water Competence/Swimming Lessons - Identify needed priorities among the components of water competency, including development of standards, policies/legislation and implementation models for all ages.

Rescue/CPR - Identify what is needed to promote and improve rescue and resuscitation of the drowning victim by laypersons, lifeguards and Emergency Medical Services (EMS)

Barrier, Entrapment and Electrical Safety - Identify ways to increase the use of fencing, barriers, alarms and emerging technologies that reduce unsupervised access to water.

Life Jackets/Personal Flotation Devices and Other Flotation - Focus on how to increase the use of Coast Guard approved life jackets by boaters, as well as by those recreating in or near the water.

For more information about the Working Groups and bios of the Working Group Chairs, [click here](#).

Phase 4

During Phase 4, we will develop recommended models for states, counties, communities and nationally. Stay tuned for more information.

Phase 5

Phase 5 will explore national level support for model implementation and develop a process for developing national consensus on minimum standards.

Phase 6

The final report and recommendations will be compiled and reviewed by a Blue Ribbon Panel with the United States National Water Safety Action Plan targeted for release in the Spring of 2022.



Photo courtesy of YMCA of the USA

WORKING GROUP UPDATES

Life Jacket/Personal Flotation Devices and Other Flotation Working Group

The Life Jacket/Personal Flotation Devices and Other Flotation Working Group meets at least once a month and has 15 members from across the U.S. with wide ranging expertise and experience. We are focusing on four primary water environments where the use of life jackets or other types of floatation could decrease drowning:

- while boating (motorized and non-motorized)
- in controlled waters (like a pool or waterpark)
- in controlled open water (like a designated swim area at a beach or lake)
- and in uncontrolled open water (like oceans, lakes, ponds, rivers where there is no signage or supervision)

We've identified five priority areas for changes at the national, state and local level: Communications/Media, Access to Life Jackets, Technology/Engineering, Mandatory Wear/Enforcement, Education/Training. The Social Ecological Model is helping to guide our thinking about change at the individual, community and policy level. High risk groups like teen males, influencers like parents or national organizations and a lens of equity are helping to guide the work.

Barriers, Entrapment, and Electrical Safety Working Group

The Barrier, Entrapment, and Electrical Safety working group is comprised of leading subject matter experts from across the nation. This 12 member working group has been sub divided into four groups which will engage in the following detailed work: 1) Survey of types of barrier, entrapment and electrical safety devices and systems on the market and in future production focusing on a multitude of categories including ease of use, cost, and reason for failure; 2) Education of barrier and entrapment devices and systems across multiple sectors including caregivers, homeowners and policy makers among others to aid in the voluntary use and awareness of barrier, entrapment and electrical safety devices; 3) Enforcement of barrier, entrapment and electrical safety devices and systems group is tasked with identifying enforcement issues with current codes and laws and recommendations on how to increase compliance; 4) Advocacy group will engage in a review of current code and legislation in place with a view towards expansion of advocacy across the nation and development of an advocacy toolkit.

Note: Each issue we will give an update on the progress of two working groups.



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YOUR HELP IS CRITICAL

We believe that capturing the knowledge and experience of water safety professionals across the United States is essential in creating a water safety plan which is comprehensive, realistic, and executable. You can help by putting your name forward as a key informant or reviewer. Thanks to all of you who have already contacted us, if we have not been in touch yet, we will be reaching out to you shortly. You can help promote the development process to ensure we reach and include the input of water safety professionals at all levels across the country. We are also still looking for funders to help underwrite the administrative costs related to developing the plan.

We invite you to visit the website at www.watersafetyusa.org/nwsap for more information and to indicate your interest in sharing your expertise.