

**Department of Education  
Guidelines for Water-Related Activities**

**Regulations**

1. Planning for water-related activities shall include:
  - a. Objectives clearly related to Individualized Education Program/Modification Plan (IEP/MP) goals and objectives
  - b. Clearance with authorities involved at the visitation site;
  - c. Arrangements with regard to contact persons, transportation, parental permission, supervision adequate for maintaining safety.
2. Safety provisions for water-related and non water-related activities in natural environments shall adhere to applicable Department of Education procedures and guidelines and site agency's rules and procedures and shall include:
  - a. Assessment of site to identify hazards prior to planned activity;
  - b. Specific warnings and reminders about the identified hazards, when necessary; and
  - c. Adequate supervision to meet the conditions of the activity at the time.

**Planning and Preparation:**

1. All water-related activities must be an extension of the standards-driven classroom instructional program or part of a STATE approved activity. Clear objectives must be established which relate to the specific IEP/MP goal and objective being worked on.
2. Staff must conform with all swimming, boating and other water-related activity protocols.
3. Parents/guardians must be informed of the inherent dangers and hazards associated with the activity. Documentation of understanding and agreement by parents/guardians must be received prior to participation and must be kept on file.
4. Parental permission forms should be reviewed prior to the activity. Forms must include student medical information and be carried on the field trip.
5. Staff must conduct an assessment of the site to identify hazards prior to the planned activity and develop appropriate safety instruction for all participants.
6. All staff and students will receive appropriate water safety instruction.
7. Supervision should be adequate and appropriate based on the needs of the student and the IEP/MP.
8. An itinerary shall be filed at the agency and shall include names of all staff/students. Changes in the activity will be immediately reported to the agency.

**On the Day of the Activity/On-Site Checks:**

1. Prior to leaving on the activity, students should be monitored for illness, sores, cuts, and other open wounds. Appropriate follow-up measures should be taken.
2. Upon arrival at the site, survey the area quickly to determine if conditions are "normal". Should any unanticipated hazards be identified, an assessment must be made to determine if the activity should continue. The adult staff member(s) will make that determination.
3. Field dangers and hazards, and emergency safety plans will be reviewed with staff at the field site prior to the start of the activity.
4. Staff should spend several minutes with the students observing the area, looking for unanticipated hazards or heavy surf conditions. Point out the possible hazardous areas to the students.

5. Staff will establish and indicate the boundaries of the area to the students.
6. A review of the emergency procedures will be conducted.
7. Applicable safety precautions should be observed while engaged in the activity. Warnings of hazards and reminders of safety procedures should be given throughout the activity as appropriate. One adult should remain on the beach or shoreline to observe the overall activity.
8. A first aid kit, blanket and telephone should be available at the site.
9. It is highly recommended that students protect themselves from the sun by using sunscreen and/or other form of sun protection.

### **Swimming Activity Guidelines:**

In addition to the water-related guidelines indicated, the swimming guidelines listed below will be followed in order to assure safety of participants in swimming situations.

1. The swimming activity must conform to the STATE's water-safety guidelines.
2. Depending on the nature of the swimming activity, at least one certified lifeguard or equivalent person shall be present during the activity.
3. Supervision should be adequate and appropriate based on the needs of the student and the IEP/MP.
4. In addition, at least one staff should be at the site to oversee the entire activity and will not have a student assigned to them. This staff is an "active spotter" and will assist the lifeguard or equivalent person in maintaining safety at the field site.
5. For swimming activities other than "learn to swim", all students will receive instruction and training in the water safety protocol prior to the activity. Successful completion of water-safety instruction and training for all students, including students swimming abilities, will be documented and kept on file. Students should be able to stay afloat in the water for at least one hour. This includes survival float and survival swim.
6. No student will be allowed in the water alone.
7. A water rescue device will be readily available to the staff on shore. Staff will be trained in the deployment of the water rescue device.
8. Warnings of hazards and reminders of safety procedures should be given throughout the activity as appropriate.

### **Boating Activity Guidelines**

In addition to the water-related guidelines, the boating activity guidelines listed below will be followed in order to provide students with a safe boating activity.

1. All boating activities must be an extension of the standards-driven classroom instructional program or part of a STATE approved activity. Clear objectives must be established which relate to the specific IEP/MP goal and objective being worked on.
2. Personnel, knowledgeable in water safety, will be designated as the "safety coordinator" and located on land, boat, or escort vessel to monitor canoe/boat activities.
3. The boat must be seaworthy and equipped with safety equipment, including rescue and firefighting equipment and a personal floatation device (pfd that is age appropriate) for each participant. The vessel must have a current safety check by the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary.
4. The boat captain must be a qualified, licensed boat operator (passed boat handling course conducted by the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary).

5. The agency and designated activity personnel will have a copy of the boat's flat plan, including list of participants, destination, length of trip, expected departure/arrival times, departure/arrival sites, and alternate plans for inclement weather.
6. Safety orientation must be provided to all participants prior to and during the boating activity as appropriate.
7. Supervision should be adequate and appropriate based on the needs of the student and the IEP/MP. Agency personnel must be able to swim and know safety procedures appropriate for that activity.
8. The vessel's designated passenger limit must not be exceeded.
9. Participants' swimming abilities should be assessed and appropriate safety precautions taken for the boating activity. It is highly recommended that all participants wear personal floatation devices during the boating activity. Non-swimmers **MUST** wear personal floatation devices.
10. Participants must wear appropriate footwear/attire. They should also protect themselves from the sun by using sunscreen and other sun protection.
11. On the day of the activity, conditions of the site and abilities/preparedness of the participants should be checked prior to the beginning of the activity. Contingency plans should be established and ready for implementation in the event that weather/ocean conditions are inappropriate on the day of the activity.

### **Terrestrial Activities: Hiking**

While terrestrial activities, such as hiking, do not qualify as true water-related activities, there are times when students will come across small streams, ponds, lakes, etc. In these instances during hikes, it is critical that staff be mindful of and observe appropriate water-related safety precautions identified earlier. It is especially important to

1. Note trail conditions: ease of access to trail, fallen obstacles, overgrown brush and grass, stream crossing, depth of stream, possible areas of fallen rocks, steepness of trail, forks and junctions, and crumbly rocks.
2. Check weather conditions. Recent heavy rains may have caused landslides, mud, and slippery conditions.

### **Other Precautions and Guidelines for Terrestrial Activities**

1. All terrestrial activities must be an extension of the standards-driven classroom instructional program or part of a STATE approved activity. Clear objectives must be established which relate to the specific IEP/MP goal and objective being worked on.
2. Staff will follow routine practices highlighted in the water-related activity guidelines, i.e. surveying the site prior to the activity, obtaining appropriate permissions, filing information with the agency, preparing all students and staff, etc.
3. Supervision should be adequate and appropriate based on the needs of the student and the IEP/MP.
4. Establish rules of conduct appropriate for the group, site, and activity. Discuss procedures to follow in case students "get lost".
5. In addition to first aid kit and related supplies, necessary safety rescue equipment (rope) and communication device (cellular telephone) must be available.
6. Check with appropriate authorities regarding current trail conditions.
7. Plan and write out a "trail plan" and leave it with the agency. Include the following: 1) list of students; 2) time of arrival and approximate departure; 3) travel time to trail head; 4) name of trail; and 5) time on trail.

8. Prepare a checklist of items to bring on the hike: daypack to carry food, water, and other articles; rain gear; sunburn protection; insect repellent; light jacket. Staff should additionally carry: extra shoe laces or cord; water proof matches; gloves; toilet paper; first aid kit; moleskin; compass; permits; pocket knife; and whistle.
9. Discuss appropriate attire for the activity. Students must wear footwear at all times. Slippers are not suitable for hiking activities, and shoes must be required.
10. Take a head count prior to the start of the hike.
11. Select a "point person" (lead hiker) and a "trail sweep" (last hiker).
12. Review emergency procedures in effect during the activity. Indicate the location of safety and first aid equipment.
13. Plan rest stops along the way (approximately five minutes for each hour of hiking).
14. Lift and lower branches that cross the trail instead of pushing them forward.
15. Do not drink water from streams or ponds.
16. Stay on the trail at all times. Avoid going close to the edge of the trail or cliffs. Short cuts may be hazardous, and false trails made by hunters, wild animals and indifferent hikers can cause confusion
17. If one becomes lost, stay put. A search party will be sent out.
18. Take a final headcount before leaving the site.