



## **BEST PRACTICES FOR WATER ACTIVITIES ON FIELD TRIPS AND OTHER SPECIAL EVENTS**

1. Scope
  - a. This document provides guidance for conducting safe and successful:
    - 1) Water activities at outdoor school, camps, and institutes;
    - 2) Water activities during field trips to local beaches;
    - 3) Water activities during field trips to local mountains;
    - 4) Water activities at other off-campus locations.
  - b. Exceptions:
    - 1) Interscholastic high school teams are to be governed by the rules, regulations, and guidelines set by the California Interscholastic Federation, Southern Section
    - 2) Physical Education classes that are conducted on campus
2. Definitions
  - a. Water Activities on Field Trips
    - 1) Activities:
      - a) Wading, swimming, diving, skim boarding, boogey boarding, snorkeling, and activities available at water parks.
      - b) All surfing and sailing is addressed in the VCSSFA “Competitive Sports and Sport Clubs Self-Insurance Program.”
      - c) Canoes, kayaks, and all other boats are addressed in the VCSSFA “Minimum Guidelines for Ocean Field Trips Involving Water Craft.”
    - 2) Locations:
      - a) Oceans, seas, gulfs, sounds, bays, inlets, coves, fjords, lagoons, reservoirs, lakes, ponds, rivers, canals, aqueducts, streams, creeks, brooks, water parks, pools, spas, and hot tubs.

- b. “Underwater Activities”
  - 1) “Underwater Activities” means all activities occurring below the surface of water requiring “specialized underwater breathing apparatus” including, but not limited to scuba diving, deep sea diving, and underwater construction and demolition including underwater welding.
  - 2) “Specialized underwater breathing apparatus” means equipment for which breathing air is supplied by a hose or tank.
  - 3) “Underwater Activities” are excluded from the VCSSFA self-insurance program. See the VCSSFA Liability Coverage Memorandum, Section V, Exclusions, Paragraph 2, Gaps in Coverage, subparagraph b.
- 3. Supervision
  - a. All supervisors must be at least 21 years of age.
  - b. At least one supervisor must be trained in CPR from any recognized agency
  - c. One (1) adult supervisor per ten (10) students
  - d. Take an accurate count of the group before entering and exiting the water activity area.
  - e. Identify and observe non-swimmers
    - 1) Assign at least one (1) supervisor to the non-swimmer group, maintaining the required ratio.
  - f. Supervisors attend activities to supervise students.
- 4. Lifeguards
  - a. Water activities are to take place only where certified life guards are present.
    - 1) Life guards are not counted for supervisor/student ratios.
  - b. Camp staff certified in aquatics may be substituted for a certified life guard.
- 5. Student discipline
  - a. Be sure everyone understands and agrees that swimming is allowed only with proper supervision and following safety rules.
    - 1) The applicable rules should be presented and learned prior to the activity, and should be reviewed for all participants at the water's edge just before the water activity begins.

- b. Rules at water parks, pools, spas, and hot tubs
    - 1) No running or pushing on deck
    - 2) No pushing, dunking, being on someone's shoulders, or rough play in or around the pool
    - 3) No prolonged breath holding
    - 4) No diving off deck into shallow water, water must be six (6) feet or deeper
    - 5) One person at a time on diving boards
    - 6) Stay clear of diving area
    - 7) Discontinue swimming if there are any indications of bad weather
    - 8) No food or gum chewing in pool area
    - 9) Obey lifeguards and supervisors
    - 10) Follow all other posted rules and regulations
    - 11) Ensure non-swimmers stay in designated safe areas
  - c. Rules for other water activity locations (including, but not limited to, beaches, lakes, rivers, and creeks)
    - 1) Use a buddy system
    - 2) Swimming is allowed only in designated areas
    - 3) No distance swimming
    - 4) No prolonged breath holding
    - 5) Discontinue swimming if there are any indications of bad weather
    - 6) Obey Lifeguards and supervisors
    - 7) Follow all other posted rules and regulations
    - 8) Ensure non-swimmers stay in areas no more than knee deep
6. Safe Area
- a. Ensure pools, spas, and water parks comply with the Virginia Graeme Baker Pool and Spa Safety Act.
  - b. Establish a safe area for non-swimmers, no more than knee deep
  - c. When water activities occur in areas not regularly maintained and used for swimming, have lifeguards and accomplished swimmers systematically examine the bottom of the swimming area to determine varying depths, currents, deep holes, rocks, stumps, and other hidden hazards.

7. Required Forms:
  - a. District Forms
    - 1) Field Trip/Excursion Authorization and Medical Treatment Authorization with attached practice schedule and competition schedule
    - 2) Swimmer Ability Form
    - 3) Personal Vehicle Use
    - 4) Student Transportation Permission
  - b. Accident Reports
    - 1) VCSSFA “Report of Personal Accident” Form VCSS SFA – 1006 must be completed after any injury arising out of or in the course of travel to, or participation in water activities on field trips or other special events.
    - 2) All accident reports must be completed thoroughly, accurately, and submitted to the district office within 24 hours of the incident.
8. Transportation
  - a. Refer to “Best Practices for Student Activity Transportation.”
9. Weather-related conditions (as applicable)
  - a. Review weather conditions and information prior to each water activity and be aware of any warning. Evaluate the weather and event:
    - 1) National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)  
805-278-0760
    - 2) National Weather Service  
805-988-6610
  - b. Activities are to be discontinued and/or cancelled if the following weather-related conditions exist:
    - 1) Heavy rain
    - 2) Thunder
    - 3) Lightning
    - 4) Waves higher than five (5) feet (island and beach activities)
  - c. Sun protection
    - 1) Students and adults are to use waterproof sun block with a Sun Protection Factor (SPF) of 30 or higher. Sun block is to be reapplied periodically and particularly after activities in water.

- 2) When out of water, students and adults are encouraged to also wear wide-brimmed hats, long-sleeved T-shirts and sunglasses, and avoid the mid-day sun.
- 3) Canopies and/or umbrellas are also recommended to provide protection from the sun.