

## Chapter 4: AQUATIC ACTIVITIES

### Purpose Of These Requirements

Giving children the opportunity to experiment with water encourages active exploration and discovery of the natural environment. Child care providers must be knowledgeable of the potential hazards associated with water play to provide a safe, stimulating care environment for children. The purpose of these requirements is to provide water safety standards to ensure children's safety at all times when participating in aquatic activities. Children participating in swimming and water activities involve a high level of risk. Caregiving staff must be attentive when supervising children during these activities. Children can drown in as little as a few inches of water. While the potential for drowning in young children may be obvious, other children, even those who are capable swimmers, may be tempted to exceed their own abilities, and may give in to fatigue, cramps, or other hazards. Appropriate supervision and safety systems must be in place to keep children safe.

Staff involved in providing swimming and water play activities for children, have the responsibility to:

- Assess the risk associated with the water activity;
- Minimize these risks;
- Help children develop habits that will reduce or prevent accidents and injuries while swimming or participating in water play activities;
- Use effective supervision and maintain staff to child ratios to ensure children are safe;
- Have the skills, experience and knowledge required to conduct swimming and water play activities; and
- Know when and how to act in an emergency.

### Definitions

**The NC Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Child Development defines the following:**

**Aquatic Activities:** activities that take place in, on, or around a body of water such as swimming, swimming instruction, wading, visits to water parks, and boating. Aquatic activities do not include water play activities such as water table play, slip and slide activities, or playing in sprinklers.

**The NC Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Division of Environmental Health defines the following types of structures associated with aquatic activities.**

**Swimming Pools:** are public swimming pools used primarily for swimming.

**Spas:** are public swimming pools designed for recreational and therapeutic use that are not drained, cleaned, or refilled after each individual use.

**Wading Pools:** are public swimming pools designed for use by children, including wading pools for toddlers and children's activity pools designed for casual water play ranging from splashing activity to the use of interactive water features placed in a pool.

### SECTION 1: STAFF

#### **CHILD CARE RULE .1403** **Requirements for Life Guards**

★ For every 25 children in care participating in aquatic activities, there must be at least one person who has a current lifeguard training certificate.

- Current lifeguard training certificate must be issued by the Red Cross or other training determined by the Division to be equivalent to the Red Cross training, appropriate for both the type of body of water and type of aquatic activities.
- If the lifeguard is employed by the child care center, the center must keep a copy of the lifeguard training certificate in his/her personnel file.
- If you will be taking children off-site to go swimming, you will need to make sure the pool has enough lifeguards with the appropriate training. One certified lifeguard for every 25 children in care participating in aquatic activities.

### SECTION 2: RATIOS

#### **CHILD CARE RULES .1403** **Ratios During Aquatic Activities**

- ★ There must be at least one person with a lifeguard training certificate for each group of 25 or fewer children in care participating in aquatic activities. This person cannot count in the required staff/child ratio for aquatic activities.
- ★ Regardless of the number of children participating, a minimum of two staff members must supervise aquatic activities.
- ★ Children under the age of three cannot participate in aquatic activities except, when necessary, to implement any child’s Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) or Individualized Education Program (IEP).

The staff-child ratios are as follows:

| <u>Age of Children</u> | <u>Ratio Staff/Children</u> |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 3 to 4 Years           | 1/8                         |
| 4 to 5 Years           | 1/10                        |
| 5 Years and Older      | 1/13                        |

- At no time should there be fewer than two staff members supervising aquatic activities.

**HH** - It is a good idea to conduct frequent, formal head counts to ensure all children are safe and accounted for.

### **SECTION 3: SUPERVISION**

#### **CHILD CARE RULE .1403 Supervision of Aquatic Activities**

- Children must be adequately supervised by center staff at all times.
- Adequate supervision means that half of the center staff needed to meet the staff-ratios for aquatic activities is in the water and the other half is out of the water. If an uneven number of staff are needed to meet the required staff-child ratios, the majority of staff must be in the pool.
- Prior to staff entering the water, staff must be stationed in pre-assigned areas.
- Staff must be stationed in pre-assigned areas that enable them at all times to hear, see, and respond quickly to the children who are in water and children who are out of the water.

- Staff must devote their full attention to supervising the children in their pre-assigned areas of coverage and must communicate with one another about children moving from one area to another area.

- Adequate supervision is also necessary while children are using changing rooms, rest rooms, and while they are moving to and from the transportation vehicle to the activity area.

**HH** - Caregivers are encouraged to evaluate each child's skill level in the water. A test by a certified lifeguard/instructor is the best way to determine a child's skill level. However, regardless of an individual's skill level, close supervision at all times is imperative.

## SECTION 4: POLICIES

### **CHILD CARE RULE .1403 Policies for Aquatic Activities**

-  Prior to children participating in aquatic activities, the center must develop policies. (Required items are listed below.)
-  Before staff first supervise children during an aquatic activity, and annually thereafter, staff must sign and date statements that they have reviewed the center policies related to aquatic activities, any specific guidelines provided by the pool operator, and child care requirements related to aquatic activities.

- The center must develop policies that address the following:
  - aquatic safety hazards;
  - pool and aquatic activity area supervision including restroom or changing room use;
  - how discipline is handled during aquatic activities; and
  - the facility’s specific field trip and transportation policies and procedures.
- Policies must be developed before children can participate in aquatic activities.
- The signed and dated statements that they have reviewed the center’s policy must be maintained in the staff person’s file for one year or until it is superseded by a new statement.
- If you are using a pool that is not operated by the child care center, contact the pool operator to obtain their rules and guidelines. These must be shared with center staff and cannot conflict with child care requirements related to aquatic activities.

## SECTION 5: LOCATION

### **CHILD CARE RULE .1403 Location of Swimming Pools**

-  Any outdoor swimming pool, which is located on the child care facility premises, must be enclosed by a fence.
-  The swimming pool must be separated from the remaining outdoor play area by that fence.

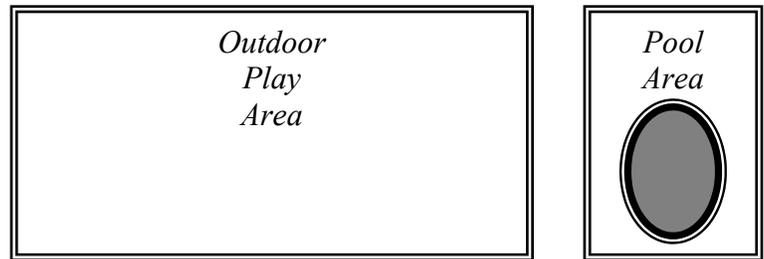
- The fence must be adequate enough to keep the children away from the water except during planned and supervised swimming activities.
- To ensure the safety of the children, the gate to the fenced pool area must be kept locked when the pool is not in use.
- The swimming pool can be included in the fenced outdoor play area of the center but a separate fence must be installed to separate the play area from the pool area.



**Can you show me some options for the location of an on-site swimming pool?**

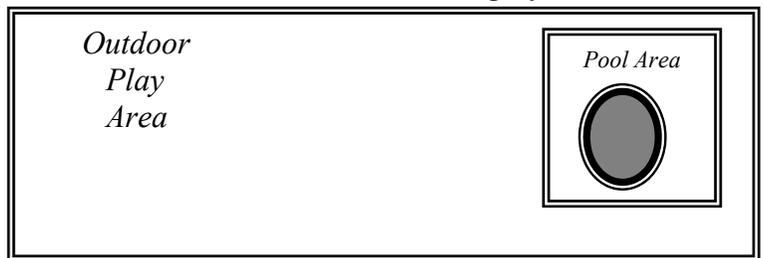
**Option 1**

Pool located outside of fenced play area



**Option 2**

Pool located within fenced play area



## SECTION 6: SAFETY PROCEDURES

### CHILD CARE RULE .1403

#### Swimming Pool Safety Rules

- ★ Swimming pool safety rules must be posted near any swimming pool located on the child care facility premises.
- ★ At a minimum, the swimming pool safety rules must state:
  1. the location of a first-aid kit;
  2. that only water toys are permitted;
  3. that children shall not run or push one another;
  4. that swimming is allowed only when an adult is present; and
  5. that glass objects are not allowed.

**HH-** Children who cannot swim should wear a life jacket.



For information on life jackets refer to a tip sheet created by the Academy of Pediatrics at [www.aap.org/family/tippslip.htm](http://www.aap.org/family/tippslip.htm).

**HH -** It is also recommended to have signed parental permission for children to participate in aquatic activities if they occur on-site at the center. Parental permission is required if the children will participate in off-site aquatic activities.



Guidelines for **Stocking a First Aid Kit** are located in the resource section at the end of this chapter.



For pool safety tips refer to the resource on **Drowning Prevention and Safety Tips** located in the resource section.

## SECTION 7: CONSTRUCTION AND INSPECTIONS

### CHILD CARE RULE .1403

#### Swimming Pool Construction

- ★ All swimming pools used by children must meet the “Rules Governing Public Swimming Pools” in accordance with 15A NCAC 18A .2500.



The "Rules Governing Public Swimming Pools" are written and enforced by the NC Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and are incorporated by the Division of Child Development (DCD) for licensed child care centers.

- If a swimming pool does not meet these standards, it cannot be used by children in care. The child care consultant will restrict the license issued to the child care center to assure that the swimming pool will not be used and parents must be informed of this permit restriction.

 Turn to the resource section for a full copy of these rules or visit the NC DENR's web site at [www.enr.state.nc.us](http://www.enr.state.nc.us).

Some important items contained in Rules Governing Public Swimming Pools are listed below for your information.

- All swimming and wading pools must meet the standards for public swimming pools if they are going to be used by children in licensed child care.
- Public swimming pools must be inspected annually by an Environmental Health Specialist from a local health department.
- An operation permit is required and must be updated annually.
- Swimming pools must be protected by a fence, wall, building, or other enclosure, which completely encloses the swimming pool area and is at least 4 feet tall. All gates and doors must be equipped with a self-closing and positive self-latching closure that has a locking device.
- A filtration system and chemical treatment are required of all swimming and wading pools.

 Inspections are documented on an **Inspection of Swimming Pool** form. A sample of this form is located in the resource section.

# RESOURCE SECTION

## Chapter 4: Aquatic Activities

**The following pages contain resource materials discussed in or related to the preceding chapter.**

Some of the resources are forms created by the Division of Child Development and must be used by licensed child care centers. Other materials are provided as a resource only for child care centers and can be used at the discretion of the center.

Center operators may also wish to use this section to add any additional resource materials they have that are related to the chapter or information that is specific to their child care center.