

**TEMPORARY COMMISSION ON DROWNING PREVENTION**

**FRIDAY, MARCH 10, 2023**

**9:30-11:30 AM**

**Minutes**

Present

Marrick McDonald

Brian Tobin

Kathryn Colglazier

Heidi Reiss

Casper Lassiter

Michael Switalski

Timothy Shay

Kevin Clark

Kevin Clark

Gwen McNamara

Michael Bauer\*

Greg Slade\*- Assemblywoman Stacey Pheffer Amato designee, Greg Slade

Other attendees:

Lisa Zarden

Jennifer Hogan

Aisha Roberts

Filomena Rusch

Timothy Shay

Joyce Presley

Christina Jorge

Catlin Smith

Shawn Levin

Jennifer Maglienti

Richard Alden

The meeting was opened by Commissioner Marrick McDonald. Introductions of

Approval of Minutes from meeting on March 10, 2023

Motion

First

Mike Switalski

Second

Brian Tobin

All approved, motion to approve the minutes accepted

## Public Participation Discussion

A discussion was had as to when public discussion should be allowed at a meeting to provide needed input and not slow down the process.

After the discussion there was a motion by Brian Tobin to “the chair of the meeting can make the decision about participation by noncommission members during the meeting and that we have the opportunity for comment and question from the general public for a limited time in the beginning and the end of the meeting per the recommendation of the chair if the meeting.”

Seconded by Kathryn Colglazier, all in favor, none opposed, motion carried

Marrick raised the question to Assembly Representative for a formal extension to February 2024.

The motion was made by Kevin Clark and seconded by Mike Switalksi, all in favor, none opposed, motion carried

Lisa Zarda- Executive Director, US Swim School Association

Lisa Zarda provided insight and information on the distinction between swim instruction for stroke mechanics versus water safety instruction and water competency. She shared that there is a research paper from water skills to water competency with a table of competencies related to drowning prevention with fifteen distinct points identified. An additional study was the Griffith study that explored “Early Years Swimming-Creating Opportunities for adding Mathematical Capital to under 5s” and the benefit of baby swimming on motor development showing a potential link between infant motor development and neonatal quality indicating that the earlier skills are introduced, the improving their development in addition to increasing swimming skills. Just in the last few months updated its data on drowning facts and it now states in the United States, more children, ages one to four die from drowning than any other cause of death and that the American Academy of Pediatrics. They updated their recommendations regarding swim lessons and drowning prevention and their quote on their page. And again this links to one of their they've got great drowning prevention resources. By the way, recent studies suggest that water survival skills training and swim lessons can help reduce drowning risk. Virtual children between the ages of 1 to 4 classes that include both Parents and their children are also a good way to introduce water safety habits and start building swim readiness skills. If your child seems ready, it's a good idea to start lessons now, so they updated as an organization their recommendation that swims lessons should start at the age of 1. I will also add talking with folks at the American Academy of Pediatrics, some of which were also authors on some of these previous reports that I mentioned.

Discussion:

Focus on Goal A-1 Determine an appropriate age and/or stage of childhood

development when children can properly begin water safety and swimming instructions

Discussion on the various organizations that have established recommendations on ages to begin swimming lessons, the acknowledgment that there is a need to define a high-quality swim

program. US SwimSchool believes there needs to be a background check, and training/certification and Heidi added that they need to follow the local regulations. Marrick also added that water competency varies by organization. After continued discussion, there were also specific questions that could impact recommendations:

Kevin Clark: what is the competency of the parent who's in the water? How does that relate to success? How does that relate to the success of the child?- From Lisa, "And in fact, I know that research study outlined it and our Members echo the same thing, quite honestly. The kids that have parents in the water with them, when you compare age, age to age, actually progress slower when the parents are in the water than if the parents are not in the water with them. I think some of that is by nature of, you know, parents being cautious, possibly not, you know, letting that child explore and discover what they can do and accomplish. I think there's probably more research that needs to be done around that, but that was the early indication again and Heidi can probably speak to that as well, but we hear from several Members that unfortunately sometimes the parents can be a little bit of a hindrance. However, they too need water, safety, and education. It needs to be a whole family affair to get it ingrained in the family culture of that water safety and that message that you know, just because your child does know how to swim does not mean that you can take your eyes off of them for, you know any reason. If any child, no matter how good of a swimmer they are, is in or near the water, you need to be watching them. And so all of that, you know, needs to be a part of that swim education as well."

Marrick: It was indicated that you thought that parent-child education aquatic education could happen as early as three months the CDC, and the American Association of Pediatrics indicates six months. could you please explain why you differ from the American Academy of Pediatrics? Lisa- "It's based on experience from some of our members that have you know had success with starting again those child children as early as possible. I know there is some discussion on some reflexes that babies are born with that they can sometimes you know leverage that reflex to kind of get them comfortable in the water." Heidi mentioned that many of their children start at four months depending on their particular circumstances and that the children who start earlier have progressed very quickly

Marrick: How much of that buoyancy is caused by baby fat? Heidi, "We have not found a correlation, we have had more buoyant children and children with diagnoses such as Williams syndrome or cerebral palsy where they have had a recommendation from their pediatricians. And it is more about getting them accustomed to being in that position in the water that aids in their progress."

Brendan O'Melveny (Public Comment) Mayor Brendan O'melveny, Chief Aquatics officer and imagine swimming in New York City, founder of the New York Water Safety Coalition. We start our baby splash program at approximately 2 months and the reason is that there's not a lot of submersion or any of that kind of work in that initial. The initial period is Meant to educate parents and increase the comfort level of parents in the water. And with that process, when they understand how to keep their child safe in and around the water, they become much more relaxed and we see significantly better results. As a father of two, I started my children as soon as their belly buttons were healed and it's incredibly valuable to get the parents in at that early stage when children haven't learned fear of the water yet. And they can see that process and they can feel that, yes, that baby fat, whether it's scientifically or not proven, it gives them buoyancy and they can be supported by the water. Thank you. Thank you.

Kevin Clark: Water Temperature recommendations and how that would impact lessons/water safety education as that could shorten or lengthen the class based on temperature. Lisa- It is roughly 88 to 90 degrees, the reason is, is that due to baby fat and buoyancy and also the lack thereof a heavy amount of weight, they can get hypothermia significantly faster than a child. Older child. That's a good point. There's also a recommendation for the length of the lesson. Should be shorter when you're working with babies for that same reason.

Brian: Do you have any recommendations or standards regarding the safety of swim instruction? For example, facility depth, lifeguards, instructor to student ratio? Lisa, "two different resources, our minimum standards, address some of that and then also take a look at the water Safety USA and again I'll be sure to send you this link. I'm involved in that group and it comprises many different aquatic groups including the Red Cross, the YMCA, the American Academy of Pediatrics, as well as I think some other open water groups.

All links and resources will be provided to the commission to be distributed and shared on the temporary SharePoint site.

Focus on Goal A

Kathryn: The question that I have for the Commission is at this point in addressing the number one or letter A of the goals of the Commission to determine the appropriate age, what additional information do we feel that we need to gather for us to come to a determination of those ages? Mike- I'm starting to wonder if we shouldn't be looking at this as age, rather we should be looking at this as physical development benchmarks instead of suggesting a specific age, I think we should be recommending certain physical development benchmarks that a child has to be ready for swim lessons or water safety lessons.

Several discussions explored the differences in approaches for suggesting development instead of age. Greg provided clarity that how the legislation was written we do need to have a solid age to meet the intention. He can go back and confirm that it can be age ranges but we do need to stipulate ages in our recommendations.

Heidi discussed the age separations for her program and offered that as a starting point to develop a recommendation. Kathryn recommended that available programs that include YMCA, Red Cross, US Swim School, etc be added to the temporary SharePoint site for review.

Questions came up for water temperature and the impact that has on access if there are no pools available that would meet the recommended temperature.

Marrick: Do we have any recommendations that we want to make right now regarding this goal since we have not read all of the resources and there is additional information coming from Heidi and other resources we are asking to review?

Kathryn recommends the commission review all the information that's going to be provided and at our next meeting be able to discuss the next steps. I agree with Brian. I think letter A is really into two

separate action items. The first is water, safety, and swim lessons, and then the second is in terms of the development of the program.

The discussion was had regarding whether to incorporate the Department of Education standards into the recommendation to provide validity to our recommendations since they are broadly written to address the physical literacy of children. This went through the conversation with where the legislative efforts are for improving water safety in school-age children. That legislation has not been passed and we can set the foundation but should not overly focus on what has not been passed.

Brian recommends that we have the opportunity before the next meeting to review the materials that have been suggested and not to overwhelm everybody, but there are two organizations that many of us are probably very familiar with that provide Standards for some lessons there's the Red Cross, and then there's the YMCA. Full disclosure, I've been at WSI and AWSIT for 25 years or so, so I'm more familiar with the Red Cross and the YMCA, but I'm assuming that there's some scientific background in terms of why they have recommendations that they do and if it's possible to get some of that information before our next meeting so we can review. I think that'll help us move along. I think we need at least two, maybe three meetings, unfortunately. I know we'd like to put a bow on some things, but I think we need to get a little more information before we start pushing in that direction, and I would strongly encourage us to not. Answer Letter A without input from professionals in the field, either people who are. Experts in terms of the psychomotor development of people or physical educators because whether the rubber meets the road, how will this be applied later down the road? So there are a couple of suggestions and now I'd like to make a motion that we change.

Brian Tobin gave an overview on speaking with Adam from the National Drowning Prevention Alliance and reviewing each of the commission tasks to get his perspective on each of the listed bullet items. His recommendation was to look at the data and identify specific hotspots where we could have an impact. In addition, the need to increase awareness, especially in the middle and lower-income areas to increase knowledge around water safety.

The commission reviewed the provided map that indicates where drownings have occurred across the state from NYS, the CDC, and other areas where there is higher risk, in New York City, which is surrounded by water. Also discussion on teenage risk, and alcohol risks and the possibility of an awareness video to be made available for new parents before they leave the hospital.

#### Action Items

- Collect Age recommendations from other certifying agencies and share them with the commission for review.
- Review NYS Ed Standards for consideration of incorporating into our recommendations.
- Review Brian's survey to determine what programs are currently being used.