

**Florida Department of Health Bureau of Emergency Medical Services  
Matching Grant #M8052 Summary Report  
Submitted by:  
Institute for Child Health Policy at Nova Southeastern University  
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**Executive Summary**

To date, the Institute for Child Health Policy (IChP) at Nova Southeastern University is concluding the *Community Services and Needs Assessment* phase regarding drowning prevention. In addition to the hospitals, county health departments and injury prevention organizations contacted throughout the state of Florida, we were able to identify the needs of the EMS agencies regarding drowning prevention resources. A brief survey for all licensed EMS providers was compiled to assess strengths and challenges in reaching families to address drowning prevention. The survey was sent out through a web-based link every Friday for a month's time via the Weekly Snapshot of Bureau Information and EMS Resources. The BEMS Weekly Snapshot is sent to all licensed providers throughout Florida. The following questions were asked:

1. What drowning prevention resources do you currently use?
2. Do you currently partner with an organization that addresses drowning prevention?
3. What tools/resources does EMS staff need to better educate the community regarding drowning prevention? Please be as specific as possible? (For example: educational materials, training for families, etc.)
4. In which county do you serve?

We partnered with the Broward County Drowning Prevention workgroup meeting to disseminate our findings thus far with other stakeholder organizations targeting drowning prevention. By forming a single task force collaborative efforts are potentiated. Participants attended from various areas, including but not limited to hospitals, non-profits organizations, injury prevention organizations, EMS Agencies, the public school system, universities, county health departments, media/marketers and grass roots organizations.

In addition to the traditional tasks associated with the EMS grant, the ICHP has stepped in to assist community partners address specific requests associated with their drowning prevention initiatives. By way of example, the ICHP research staff assisted Joe DiMaggio's Children's Hospital in their goal of assessing the drowning knowledge, practices, and information sources of parents/caregivers utilizing their emergency room services. Through that collaboration results were shared with our project partners and an abstract has been submitted to the 137<sup>th</sup> American Public Health Association conference entitled "Water and Public Health". Once materials are finalized staff we will move forward with the *Service Coordination* phase as outlined in the grant proposal.

The *Service Coordination* phase of the grant was brought together through the use of a website incorporating all forms of media and resources relating to drowning prevention. Aside from the clean and easily navigable interface of the site, it offers much more than any other sites of its kind. As determined through the surveys completed by EMS providers, this web based resource is void of any "Log-In" or "Sign-In" requirements as well as provides a number of resources that are geared toward family use. Links are broken down into categories such as Parents, Laws & Guidelines, Children's Games, and Alternate Language Resources for easy referencing of relevant materials. Each link is equipped with a rating system that allows users to determine whether the link was helpful or not. Other features include an "Events Calendar" that all community organizations can use to post events such as CPR training, swim lessons, educational seminars, and anything else relating to drowning prevention. A slide show on the homepage will also run images and description of upcoming events as well as photos from events that have just concluded. Aside from the straight layout and multiple resources available, the site serves well as a one stop resource for all those eager to learn more about water safety.

### **Introduction:**

This section of the study involved conducting a through assessment of community services and needs surrounding drowning prevention in the State of Florida, to identify gaps

in existing services. An inventory has been created of drowning prevention resources and services available to families, pediatricians, emergency medical responders, media, and other interested community members. The inventory was collected by surveying EMS agencies, Hospitals, County Health Department and injury prevention organizations within the State of Florida. The report will highlight available resources as well as suggest recommendations for overcoming challenges for EMS agencies and other organizations that serve as a source of information for families, care givers and providers in Florida.

### **EMS Agencies:**

In order to identify the needs of the EMS agencies regarding drowning prevention resources a brief survey was compiled for all licensed providers to assess how to community strengths and challenges in reaching families to address drowning prevention. The survey was sent out weekly through a web-based link every Friday for a month via the Weekly Snapshot of Bureau Information and EMS Resources that is sent to all licensed providers throughout Florida. The following questions were asked:

1. What drowning prevention resources do you currently use?
2. Do you currently partner with an organization that addresses drowning prevention?
3. What tools/resources does EMS staff need to better educate the community regarding drowning prevention? Please be as specific as possible? (For example, educational materials, training for families, etc.)
4. In which county do you serve?

Of the 67 respondents for question 1, "what drowning prevention resources do you currently use?" 35 (52%) "do not currently utilize drowning prevention resources". Of those that utilize drowning prevention resources 13 (19%) "utilize other EMS agencies"; 13 (19%) "utilize the American Red Cross"; 13 (19%) "utilize the County Health Departments", 5 (7.5%) "utilize online resources; 4 (6%) "utilize Physicians"; 4 (6%) "utilize Nurses"; 13 (19%) "utilize injury prevention organizations"; and 19 (28%) "utilize other resources".

In order to gauge which injury prevention organizations are used as drowning prevention resource respondents listed the following organizations listed in the table below.

<b>Answer Choices</b>	<b>Count</b>
Safe Kids	3
local Fire Department	3
United States Life Saving Association	2
Think First	2
Local EMS Agency	2
National Drowning Prevention Alliance	1
Nemours Children's Clinic	1
Local Injury Prevention Coalition	1
Recreation Department	1
local Police Department	1
local Pool Store	1
YMCA	1
County Beach Safety Division-Advanced Life Support Lifeguard Agency	1
American Safety Health Initiative First Aid courses	1
American Health Association CPR courses	1
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration RIP Current Brochure information	1
Florida Coastal Management	1
Baptist Hospital Pensacola- Trauma Program	1
St. Lucie County Drowning Prevention Program	1
Florida Injury Prevention Advisory Council	1
Community Education Department	1
Media and GTV	1
Learn to Swim Program	1
Junior Lifeguard Program	1
Elementary and Middle School Safety seminars	1

Of the 67 respondents for question 2 "do you currently partner with an organization that addresses drowning prevention?" 45 (67%) responded NO and 22 (33%) responded YES. Of the 22 that responded Yes, the following are the organizations that were listed who they partner with to address drowning prevention: 4- Safe Kids; 3- Red Cross; 1- Lee County Injury Prevention Coalition; 1 Southwest Florida Drowning Prevention Committee; 1- Local Injury Prevention Coalition; 1- Local Police Department; 1- Local Pool Company; 1- YMCA; 1- Okaloosa Beach Safety; 1- Local Fire Department; 1- United States Lifesaving Association; 1- Florida Coastal Management; 1- Regions Bank; 1- Local Public

Transportation (Display Beach Flag Safety); 1- St. Lucie County Drowning Prevention Program; **1- P.C.F.D.P.** 1- Community Coalition of Osceola Water Safety; 1- Central Florida Drowning Prevention and Water Safety Task Force; 1- County Health Department; **1- Swim America Associates.**

The counties that the respondents serve are: 2- Baker; 1- Bay; 3- Brevard; 4- Broward; 1- Charlotte; 1- Clay; 2- Collier; 1- Columbia; 6- Duval; 4- Escambia; 1- Gulf; 1- Hillsborough; 1- Indian River; 1- Lake; 2- Lee; 1- Leon; 1- Levy; 1- Manatee; 3- Marion; 3- Martin; 1- Miami-Dade; 2- Nassau; 1- Okaloosa; 3- Orange; 2- Osceola; 1- Palm Beach; 1- Pasco; 5- Pinellas; 1- Polk; 3- Sarasota; 1- Seminole; 1- St. Johns; 2- St. Lucie; 1- Sumter; 1- Union; 1- Volusia; 1- Walton

### **Hospitals:**

In order to identify gaps in existing services at the Hospitals, a list of all Hospitals in the State of Florida was obtained. A total of 211 Hospitals were called and surveyed to assess community services. A brief questioner was developed to obtain information for the hospital source. The following questions were asked:

1. Do you offer any drowning prevention resources at your facility? If yes, please specify what is offered.
2. Do you work with any agencies that do provide drowning prevention resources? If yes, please specify which agencies.

Of the 211 hospitals contacted 118 (56%) hospitals did not return our call; 75 (36%) did not have or use any Drowning Prevention material; 18 (9%) referred us to an outside organization such as the Red Cross, Swim Center, Health Department or online Resources; and only 8 (4%) said they actively used Drowning Prevention material such as Safe Kids, Water Watchers and Feet First.

Many of the hospitals that did not have or use Drowning Prevention material felt that the hospital was not an appropriate place to call for Drowning Prevention material. Common response was "you do realize that this is a hospital? Why would we have any information on Drowning Prevention?"

## **Health Departments:**

In order to identify gaps in existing services at the Health Departments, a list of all Health Departments in the State of Florida was obtained. A total of 67 Health Departments were called and surveyed to assess community services. A brief questioner was developed to obtain information for the hospital source. The following questions were asked:

1. Do you offer any drowning prevention resources at your facility? If yes, please specify what is offered.
2. Do you work with any agencies that do provide drowning prevention resources? If yes, please specify which agencies.

Of the 67 Health Departments in the State of Florida 40 (60%) do not utilize "Drowning Prevention Resources". Of the 27 (40%) Health Departments in the state of Florida that do provide Information about "Drowning Prevention", 14 (51.8%) provide materials associated with the "Florida Department of Health".

Materials supported by the Florida State Department of Health include the pamphlets for "Official Water Watchers," a program designed to prevent child drowning fatalities with their slogan "Keep Your Eyes on the Kids". The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) promotes the public education message that a supervising adult should be within an arm's length providing "touch supervision." thus allowing for the appropriate response time for any possible drowning scenario. The distinctive visual imagery associated with these two unique campaign slogans would appear to have conveyed a mixed message to the community about how best to prevent tragedy.

Out of all 67 Health Departments in the State of Florida 6 (9%) provide Websites concerning "Drowning Prevention Resources". Of the 27 (40%) Health Departments that provide drowning prevention resources 22 (81%) utilize a "Flyer or Handout" to provide the public with "Drowning Prevention" information. Of the Health Departments that do provide information to the community in the form of a "Flyer or Handout", 11 (50%) use the Florida Departments of Health's pamphlet "Keep Your Eye on The Kids". It is transparent that

“Drowning Prevention” does not have a clear motto and that there is a lack of consistency in the manner in which this information is disseminated to the public.

	<b>Ratio</b>	<b>Percent</b>
All FL CHD: w/o Info	40 / 67	60%
FL CHD w/ Info: Associated with “FL Dept. of Health”	14 / 27	51.8%
All FL CHD: Provide “Flyer/Handout”	22 / 67	32.84%
FL CHD w/ Info: Provide “Flyer/Handout”	22 / 27	81.48%
FL CHD w/ Flyers: used “Keep Your Eye On The Kids”	11 / 22	50%
All FL CHD: provide a Website	6 / 67	8.95%
FL CHD w. Info: provide a Website	6 / 27	22.22%

**Injury Prevention Organizations:**

In order to identify gaps in existing services at the Injury Prevention Organizations, a representative list of 59 organizations were obtained from National Drowning Prevention Alliance (NDPA) and would serve as a contact list to investigate their functionality on water safety and drowning prevention as community resources. A total of 49 organizations were called and surveyed to assess their community services. A brief script was developed to obtain such information. The following is the script of the telephone interview:

3. Do you offer any drowning prevention resources/materials (like fliers, brochures, etc) to your community or the general population at your organization? If yes, please specify what is offered.
4. Do you also provide drowning prevention educational materials online?

A summary of the results are as follows:

A total of 59 organizations were on the contact list. If a contact person could not be reached in the initial contact, a second call would proceed. A message would leave to the contact voice mail box if no one could be reached after two telephone contact attempts failed. Of the 59 organizations, 27 contact persons from 27 organizations had been

successfully reached and spoke with after one or two contact attempts. Only 15 of them confirmed that they provided drowning prevention information to the public as one of their services. For example, the National Drowning Prevention Alliance provided both fliers and online information to the general public regarding water safety and drowning prevention. The Association of Pool & Spa provided brochures regarding drowning prevention to the public. The majority of the organizations contacted don't provide the service of drowning prevention education to the public. We couldn't reach a contact person for 22 of the organizations on the list after 2 different phone calls. A message was left and only one organization returned our message. 10 organizations were contacted without success (busy signal, wrong contact number, etc).

We also performed a thorough online search for drowning prevention and water safety information from websites of listed organizations. We found that 38 of the organizations provided from partial to detailed information, and 18 of them didn't have much information on drowning prevention and water safety issues. Of the 38 websites that did provide drowning prevention information, 10 of them provided the information indirectly by linking readers to other website(s) that provide such information, 1 website required username and password to get access to their page, and the rest of the websites provided. A review of the drowning information on the websites revealed that:

After reviewing the online drowning prevention materials, we found out that water safety tips cover at different levels with different emphases. Some websites emphasize on adult supervision, some on pool barriers and CPRs, and a few on both of these aspects. For the adult supervision, there seemed to have no detailed explanation on the proper ways of supervision. The website for Association of Pool and Spa Professionals says that "Never leave a child unsupervised and out of eye contact in or near the pool---not even for a second. There is no substitute for constant adult supervision." The Children Safety Network posts that "Never take your eyes off of children in the pool---even for a moment!" The Drowning Prevention Foundation advised the public about adult supervision: "keep a

constant eye on young children playing in or near any body of water, wading pool, public pool, bathtub or lake.” While eye-on-child-all-the-time strategy sounds like it is the safest way to guard against drowning death, it is also the hardest one to follow in real life. The website for American Academy of Pediatrics is the only website that defines adult supervision as “Touch Supervision”, meaning that “an adult is never more than an arm’s length away, or is able to touch the child at all time.” “An adult should actively watch children at all times while they are in pool.” The public need to have a unified guideline regarding the proper ways of adult supervision on children playing in or near water.

While some websites provide pool rules and pool fences tips to guard against drowning, there is no detailed information regarding how to get those pool fences installed or where to get professional help on pool protection barriers. Among all websites we examined, the website for Drowning Prevention Foundation provided a real good example on how to put pool protection barriers in place. They have detailed descriptive texts on the standards of the pool fences, fence gates, doors and windows leading to the pool. They even have illustration diagrams to show what is called an isolation fence, what is a perimeter fence, etc. This way, readers can get a clear view of what is a standard safety device that can effectively protect/delay a young child from getting a pool unintentionally.