

# Water Safety for Families

As temperatures rise, families may be looking for fun ways to cool off and stay active. Water activities like swimming, diving, canoeing, boating, and water skiing, offer relief during these hot summer months, but it's important to remember many injuries can happen during recreational water activities.

"When we think of water safety, we generally think of swimming pools," said Dr. Joe Sills, chief of Emergency Medicine at Baystate Wing Hospital. "But there are many other places where water safety should be practiced. It's important to remember that drowning can happen anywhere there is water, including swimming pools, ponds, and lakes, and even in the presence of life-guards."

Many local communities are seeing a shift in who applies for lifeguard positions if any do at all, and it's a concern. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), more children ages 1-4 die from drowning than any other cause of death and it's the second leading cause of unintentional injury death for children ages 5-14.

"Drowning is a quick and silent killer," said Dr. Sills. "The majority of children who drown in swimming pools were last seen in the home, had been out of sight for less than five minutes, and were in the care of one or both parents at the time of the drowning. In the time it takes to cross the room for a towel (10 sec-

onds), a child in the bathtub can become submerged. In the time it takes to answer the phone (2 minutes), that child can lose consciousness. In the time it takes to sign for a package at your front door (4 to 6 minutes), a child submerged in the bathtub or pool can sustain permanent brain damage. A child that's drowning, is not going to be yelling for help. They are typically going to be struggling to keep their face above water level. You might see their face kind of going up and down above the water level, and it really can only take 30 to 60 seconds before they're completely submerged."

"The best way to prevent drowning is through the 'touch supervision' technique, which means being within an arm's length of the child at all times, able to reach them and pull them from the water immediately," said Dr. Sills.

"Remember also that inflatable aids, such as water wings and tubes, are not substitutes for adult supervision and that swimming lessons are an important step, but they do not make a child 'drown-proof,'" said Dr. Sills. "Teach children about the importance of always being with an adult and always swimming with a buddy."

Children are not the only ones that need to practice water safety, adolescents and adults do too. According to the CDC, drowning is the third most common cause of accidental death among those under age 16.

"Young people who drown are often victims of their own misjudgment of their swimming ability. They may view a river or a lake as a tempting means of cooling off in a hot spell but fail to appreciate the harmful effects that the cold water can have on stamina and strength," noted Dr. Sills. "Learning how to swim is important for folks of all ages. Those who don't know how to swim can very easily find themselves in water over their heads with little time to call for help and they can submerge and drown very quickly."

"Alcohol reduces body temperature and impairs swimming ability, balance, coordination, and judgment and its effects are heightened by sun exposure and heat," said Dr. Sills offering these additional water safety tips:

### Water Safety Tips

- Never swim alone.
- Take swimming lessons.
- Make sure you are ready to respond in case of an emergency: have an emergency phone near the body of water and learn how to perform CPR.
- Have a pool fence and keep toys away from the pool. Toys can attract young children into the pool.
- Know the depth of the water and the water temperature before swimming. Cold water can tax the body and make it difficult to swim well.
- Do not swim if you have been drinking or if you have taken medication

that alters your medical status.

- Toddlers should wear proper swim diapers designed to contain urine and feces.
- Empty all buckets, containers, and wading pools immediately after use. Store them upside-down and out of children's reach.
- Know the local weather conditions and forecast before swimming or boating.

### What to Do If You See Someone Drowning?

- Call 9-1-1 immediately.
- If the victim is within throwing distance, throw a floatable object to them. This includes a life jacket, kickboard, or even an empty gallon jug.
- If the victim is within reaching distance, assist them by extending something long, such as a rope, pole, ring buoy, or a tree branch.
- If you must enter the water to assist someone, take a flotation device large enough to carry two adults safely. Keep the device between you and the person in distress; even a child can put an adult at risk in deep water.

"Taking the right precautions, summer can be a safe and enjoyable time for the whole family," noted Dr. Sills.

For more information about Baystate Wing Hospital, visit [baystatehealth.org/wing](http://baystatehealth.org/wing).

## LEGALS

### LUDLOW PLANNING BOARD LEGAL NOTICE SPECIAL PERMIT HOME OCCUPATION

The Ludlow Planning Board will hold a public hearing in Ludlow Town Hall, Selectmen's Conference Room on **Thursday, June 27, 2024 at 7:00 p.m.** on the applica-

tion of Jillian Beaulieu of 28 Woodland Place Ludlow, MA (Assessors' Map 33, Parcel 111H) for: **interior design business.**

If for any reason this hearing is cancelled, it will be rescheduled to Thursday, July 11, 2024.

Raymond Phoenix  
Chairman

06/12, 06/19/2024

## Rep. Smola supports bill to punish the unauthorized distribution of sexually explicit images and videos

### Legislation also expands abuse definition to include coercive control

BOSTON – State Representative Todd Smola (R-Warren, Ranking Member, Committee on Ways & Means) recently supported legislation to close a loophole in Massachusetts law and address the unauthorized distribution of sexually explicit images or videos via text messaging and online postings.

"House Bill 4744 addresses a critical gap in our laws by criminalizing the unauthorized distribution of sexually explicit images and ensuring that perpetrators of revenge porn face serious consequences," said Representative Todd Smola.

House Bill 4744, An Act to prevent abuse and exploitation, criminalizes so-called "revenge porn" by establishing penalties for disseminating explicit visual material of another person without their consent. The bill also expands the definition of abuse to include coercive control and assists survivors by extending the statute of limitations for certain domestic violence offenses, including assault and battery on a family or household member or for individuals with an active restraining order, from six years to 15 years.

House Bill 4744 was enacted by the House on a vote of 151-0 on June 13 and by the Senate the same day on a voice vote. It is now before Governor Maura Healey for her review and signature.

House Bill 4744 represents a compromise reached by a six-member Conference Committee, which worked over the past month to resolve the difference between two earlier versions of the bill that had previously passed the House and Senate. Representative Alyson Sullivan-Almeida (R-Abington), who is herself a survivor of domestic abuse and an advocate for raising awareness of the problem and assisting other survivors, served on the Conference Committee and helped negotiate the final language.

Representative Smola noted that under the compromise bill, several measures will be implemented to prevent the sharing of explicit visual material without the consent of the individual being photographed or recorded. In addition to making "revenge porn" punishable by up to 2 1/2 years in prison or a \$10,000 fine, the bill increases the fine for criminal harassment from \$1,000 to \$5,000. Additionally, House Bill 4744 prevents the use of computer-generated artificial intelligence (AI) for the creation of deepfake revenge porn.

House Bill 4744 also amends the definition of "abuse" to include coercive control, which is defined as regulating and controlling communication, movements, daily behavior, and finances. This abuse often involves the isolation of victims from family or support systems, as well as threats, intimidation, and various forms of emotional abuse. Expanding this definition will allow victims of abuse to qualify for an abuse pre-

vention order.

In addition, House Bill 4744 provides for an educational diversion program for minors who engage in sexting, which would be developed by the Attorney General's office and would allow district attorneys, law enforcement, and clerk magistrates to refer a child, when appropriate, to the program. According to Representative Smola, the purpose of this diversion program is to provide an alternative punishment for minors who could otherwise be charged with felony possession of child pornography and give them a better understanding of the consequences of their actions. The bill also encourages school districts to incorporate aspects of this program into their curriculum as a learning tool for students and requires an annual review of the program and curriculum by the Office of the Child Advocate.

Massachusetts is currently one of only two states that do not have specific laws against revenge porn, the other being South Carolina. Representative Smola noted that former Governor Charlie Baker filed legislation to close this loophole and protect victims in 2017, 2019 and again in 2021, but none of those bills reached his desk, despite the House approving a bill in 2022 that died in the Senate.

Governor Healey has until June 23 to sign the bill into law.

For additional information please contact Representative Smola at [Todd.Smola@mahouse.gov](mailto:Todd.Smola@mahouse.gov) or (617) 722-2100.

## EARLY DEADLINES

In observance of July 4th,  
**PUBLIC NOTICES**  
EARLY AD DEADLINE  
Place your public notice  
no later than **NOON**  
**Thursday, June 27**  
– Thank you!

### CORRESPONDENT OPPORTUNITIES

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