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CONTACT: (609) 633-8507
Kate Bernyk
Andy Williams

DCF Commissioner Ryan Stresses Importance of Pool, Summer Safety

After two recent pool-related accidents involving children in New Jersey, Children and Families Commissioner Kevin M. Ryan is reminding parents to never leave children unattended near water and to child-proof backyard swimming pools.

“Drowning is a leading cause of preventable child death every year,” said Commissioner Ryan. “Memorial Day is approaching, and we’re getting into the season when families will be at the shore or around swimming pools. We want to stress the need to be vigilant with children around water.”

According to the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, drowning is the second leading cause of injury-related deaths among children aged 1 to 14. Among children ages 1 to 4, most drownings occur in residential swimming pools and in most cases those children had been out of sight for less than five minutes.

Commissioner Ryan stressed the following water safety tips for parents:

- Always have an ADULT supervising young swimmers.
- Never leave a child alone around water. Children are drawn to it, and very young children can drown in just an inch of water.
- Flotation devices or inflatable toys are not substitutes for supervision
- Teach children to swim at an early age.
- Obey all posted or verbal rules, warning signs and other safety signs.
- Don’t mix alcohol and supervision of children near water.
- Always drain and store plastic or blow-up wading pools in an upright position.
- Enclose pools completely with a self-locking, self-closing fence, and do not leave furniture around that children can use to climb over the fence.
- Be sure to remove pool covers completely to reduce the risk of children getting caught underneath.

More information is available through the Northeast Spa and Pool Association (NESPA), a trade organization for swimming pool builders and retailers that distributes safety information to its members and consumers every year. On the Web, go to <http://nespapool.org/safety.html>.

Commissioner Ryan also reminded parents about the dangers of leaving children unattended in or near cars this summer. Several children in New Jersey were killed or injured in recent years after being trapped in cars. In some cases, the children were left there by parents while in others the children wandered inside the cars.

“Even on a moderate day, the inside of a car can heat up to deadly levels in a short time,” said Commissioner Ryan. “It is never safe to leave a child unattended in a car, and if there are cars near where children play, parents must take precautions to be sure that kids cannot get into them.”

For the Department of Children and Families brochure on summer safety tips, visit the Web at:

<http://www.nj.gov/dcf/news/publications/SumSafetyEng.pdf> (English)

<http://nj.gov/dcf/news/publications/SumSafetySpan.pdf> (Spanish)