



EVALUATION 2009

BACKGROUND

Watch Around Water, a program targeting parent/guardian supervision of children at aquatic facilities was officially launched in August 2008. Delivery and implementation of the pilot program occurred in 15 registered facilities from September 2008 - 2009. Facilities launched the program individually and used the resources and in-house training to deliver the program messages tailored to their demographic of visitors.

Obtaining feedback from members of the aquatics industry that are involved with the delivery and implementation of the Watch Around Water program is essential to ensure the program continues to meet their needs and expectations. The program comprises an evaluation component to facilitate this process and to provide ongoing feedback to the industry on the progress of Watch Around Water.

One element of the evaluation included surveys conducted with the managers (or a facility representative) of registered facilities at the start of the pilot season and 12 months later. This document reports on the feedback from the surveys and makes recommendations to ensure the evolution of Watch Around Water.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

FACILITY MANAGERS

Awareness

Overall understanding of appropriate supervision of young children improved over time. The proportion of managers who felt that 'supervision' was the key element in the

prevention of young children drowning was 83.3% after 12 months of involvement in the program, an increase of 15%.

All respondents felt that keeping Infants/Toddlers under 5 years old at 'arms reach' was the necessary appropriate form of supervision when in and around the water. Reported appropriate supervision for children aged 5-10 years showed little change, however of concern was a reported 35% increase in respondents believing 'where audible' was appropriate supervision for children aged over 10 years.

A dramatic increase in parent/guardian awareness for the need of active supervision was observed. 78% of managers reported parents/guardians were 'more aware' of the need for active supervision whilst at their facilities since the introduction of Watch Around Water.

Policy/Guidelines

All facilities adopted the mandatory guidelines. A significant number of facilities also adopted the recommended guidelines. The two most commonly utilised recommended policies were, 'all staff to complete the WAW professional development session' and 'children under 5 years old must enter the facility with an appropriate full-paying parent/guardian prepared to swim'.

Implementation

Over 89% of managers felt that their staff were 'more and/or much more comfortable' in talking to parents about how they supervise their

children following the introduction of the program at their facilities.

Program implementation difficulties included, lack of parent/guardian compliance on new age supervision guidelines; issues with pre and post swim school 'stay & play' promotions; and message delivery to parents/guardians from a non-English speaking background.

Resources

Watch Around Water 'pull-up banners', 'brochure inserts' and 'wristbands' were considered to be the most effective in educating and encouraging the active supervision message. 'Colouring-in' pages were also popular. Some facilities used the provided templates and logos to produce their own resources, such as, additional entry signage, flyers explaining new guidelines and expected roles of lifeguards and supervisors, and FAQ handouts. Over half the managers requested resources in languages other than English.

Professional Development Training

All facilities undertook training with their lifeguards. Majority of facilities undertook training with reception, swim school and/ or crèche staff. Greater success was noted by facilities in promotion and program reinforcement when all staff participated in the training component. Indeed, 94% of respondents regarded the training as 'valuable' while increased *attendee numbers* and *regular updates* were reported as areas for improvement.

General

Over 70% of Managers reported that the Watch Around Water program made their jobs easier in encouraging parents/guardians to actively supervise their children. Over 75% of facility managers reported parental/guardian feedback

was 'mostly positive'. A similar amount of respondents (75%) reported the program to be, 'moderately successful' in its message delivery. *Maintaining message uniformity and consistency* within the facilities and *wider community awareness* outside the facilities were highlighted as areas which needed improvement.

94% of respondents reported they would recommend the Watch Around Water program to others in the industry and 94% of respondents support the idea that the program be implemented state-wide.

Further staff training and *beyond facility promotion* were areas highlighted as priority areas for development and future program success.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: Wider Community Promotion. Program advertising and wider public communication strategies to be further developed.

Recommendation 2: Ongoing Staff Training. Staff training to be ongoing and focus on public relations and conflict resolution skills.

Recommendation 3: Review Resources. Resources to be reviewed and revised annually; priority for year 1 is the provision of resources in languages other than English.

Authors: Sarah Bracchi & Dr Bernadette Matthews, Life Saving Victoria

For more information contact:

Dr Bernadette Matthews

Life Saving Victoria

Phone: 03 9676 6976

Email: bernadette.matthews@lifesavingvictoria.com.au