

Admission Standards for Public Pools – Coroner’s Recommendations

This fact sheet provides information about the Office of the Chief Coroner’s recommended admission standards for supervised public pools in Ontario. Should you have any further questions regarding the promotion or application of the recommended admission standards, please email us at Environmental.Health@ontario.ca

What are the recommended admission standards?

Admission standards apply child to parent/guardian ratios as a means of increasing direct supervision of young children, particularly those that are non-swimmers. The additional level of supervision assists lifeguards in maintaining adequate surveillance of the whereabouts and activities of young bathers while inside the pool enclosure.

The Office of the Chief Coroner’s (Coroner) recommended admission standards for supervised public pools are:

Children under the age of ten (10) would require supervision or be able to demonstrate comfort in the water by passing a facility swim test.

- A child under the age of ten is assumed to be a non-swimmer upon admittance to the pool and must be accompanied and directly supervised by a guardian of at least 12 years of age. The guardian is not required to be a swimmer.
- Children aged 6 to 9 may be admitted unaccompanied if they can pass a facility swim test administered by a lifeguard.
- All children under the age of 6 must be accompanied and directly supervised by a guardian.

Recommended Supervision Ratio:

Children under age 6	Two children to one guardian (2:1)
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Children aged 6 to 9 who are non-swimmers	Four children to one guardian (4:1) or Eight children with lifejackets to one guardian (8:1)
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Why the need for admission standards in Public Pools?

While drowning deaths in public pools are relatively rare, examination of the circumstances of recent child deaths have demonstrated that there is still room for improvement in terms of guardian supervision.

Are the recommended admission standards a legislative requirement?

No, the admission standards are not required under the Public Pools Regulation. However, the Coroner’s Office, Lifesaving Society, Canadian Red Cross (CRC) and other agencies support the application of the recommended standards to increase safety of young bathers using public pools across the province.

What is being asked of public pool owners/operators?

Public pool owners/operators are being asked to voluntarily:

- Post pool admission standards in specified locations at all Class A (supervised) pools;

- Have a means in place to ensure that children under 10 years of age are accompanied with appropriate supervision when admitted to the pool; and
- Parents/guardians are made aware of their responsibility to supervise the children in their care at all times in accordance with the admission standards.

Are there any exemptions to the recommended admission standards?

When conducting an activity such as swimming lessons in a controlled setting, adherence to the recommended admission standards is not necessary given the additional control and supervision being provided.

What would be an example of a “means” to ensure that children are accompanied by appropriate supervision when admitted to the pool?

One example that could be adapted by a pool owner/operator is the Lifesaving Society’s “Red Yellow Green System” which uses a colour-coded bracelet system. For example, a yellow bracelet could identify a child that is under age 10 and accompanied with a guardian. A red bracelet could identify if the child is unaccompanied and therefore required to pass a swim facility test. A green bracelet may be granted to a child under age 10 but over 6 years that passes a swim facility test and therefore does not require supervision.

How do operators of public pools determine if a child is a non-swimmer?

A child under age 10 is assumed to be a “non-swimmer” upon being admitted to the public pool. A child aged 6 to 9 years old may be determined to be a “swimmer” if

they are able to demonstrate comfort in the water and pass a facility swim test. The Lifesaving Society publishes guidelines on conducting facility swim tests. They recommend that individuals should be able to demonstrate comfort in the water by swimming a minimum of two widths of the pool (approx. 50m) continuously in shallow water.

Are other public pool owners/operators in Ontario currently using admission standards?

96% of supervised pools in Ontario have voluntarily implemented some form of admission standards.

Since admission standards are not regulated, many municipalities have chosen to make their admission standard policy stricter than those proposed by the Coroner’s Office (e.g., guardians of an older age, lower ratios of children to parent/guardian, etc).

How could I get more information on admission standards to better protect users of my swimming pool?

The Canadian Red Cross (CRC) and Lifesaving Society offer training in aquatic supervision. The CRC offers a swim teacher program designed to improve the overall approach to safe use of pool and waterfronts. This is offered to those that already have training in lifeguarding. The Lifesaving Society offers programs to both lifeguard trained and non-lifeguard trained individuals:

- “Aquatic Management Training” is targeted to non-aquatic individuals providing information to help ensure the safety of swimming facilities.
- “Aquatic Supervisor Training” is for those holding lifeguard training certification (National Lifeguard Services Certificate).