

Supervision of Boating Activities **for New York State Children's Camps** Fact Sheet – June 2016

Boating is a popular activity at many children's camps. In addition to providing hours of enjoyment, boating activities also include the risk of injury or drowning. At a children's camp, a boating activity leader or trip leader is required to oversee all watercraft activities. Camp operators must ensure that the boating activity or trip leader is well qualified and trained. Boating activity and trip leader duties include supervision of specialty staff and counselors and implementation of the camp's safety plan. Factors to consider when selecting a camp's boating activity or trip leader include the following:

Age and Maturity:

- Activity and trip leaders are required by Subpart 7-2 of the New York State Sanitary Code (SSC) to be a minimum of 18 years-old.
- In addition to the activity or trip leader's age, camp operators should select an individual that demonstrates maturity and an ability to supervise staff and make safety assessments and decisions to protect campers' well-being while boating.

Training and Experience:

- Activity and trip leaders must be experienced and competent in the types of boats being used and hazards associated with the activity. Safety plans must specify supervision and safety requirements. All staff supervising boating activities must receive annual safety plan and site specific training relevant to the activity prior to overseeing it.
 - Trip leaders are required to review the camp safety plan for each trip within 24 hours prior to departure (except when the staff participated in an identical trip or in the pre-camp training within one week prior to the intended trip). Activity leaders should have a similar safety plan review procedure.
- Activity and trip leaders must possess knowledge and skills in emergency procedures for severe weather, boating safety, water rescue, characteristics and hazards of water bodies, lifejacket use and care, and swamped/capsized boat procedures.
- Staff must be assigned the responsibility for assessing weather and environmental conditions and make the decision to hold or cancel the activities.
- Trip leaders are required to have participated in at least three camp trips in a similar program activity as a children's camp staff member or have experience and training in the activity which the permit-issuing official has determined to be equivalent to three camp trips.
 - Camps may rely on off-site facility staff or vendors to provide competent boating staff; however, the camp operator is ultimately responsible for determining that off-site staff possess adequate knowledge and experience to safely lead the boating activity.

- When selecting activity leaders, camps should consider selecting staff who have more than one season of prior experience participating in children's camp boating activities or in a similar setting.

Certifications:

- **Non-motorized Boats:** Nationally recognized training courses are a good way to ensure staff are adequately trained. The New York State Department of Health does not approve boating certifications for children's camps; however, the following are examples of organizations that offer boating training certifications:
 - American Canoe Association
 - American Red Cross
 - American Sailing Association
 - Boy Scouts of America
 - US Sailing
- **Motorized Boats:** In addition to Subpart 7-2 of the SSC, motorized boats must comply with [New York State Navigation Law](#), which contains requirements for boat inspection, licensure, and operator certification from an [approved boating safety course](#). Contact the Marine Services unit of the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation (OPRHP) at 518-474-0445 or visit their website at <http://nysparks.com/recreation/boating> for questions and additional information regarding motorized boat operation and certification requirements.
- **Lifeguard Certification:** Lifeguards can be a valuable addition to staff supervising boating activities. Lifeguard certification courses do not typically include watercraft rescue techniques and procedures, so additional training should be considered for lifeguards supervising boating activities. Based on the number and location of boats, more than one lifeguard may be needed to adequately supervise the activity.
- **First Aid and CPR Certifications:** When the boating activity takes place at a location where camp staff certified in First Aid and/or CPR are not readily available, the activity leader must possess, or be accompanied by staff who possess, [acceptable First Aid and CPR certifications](#). A trip leader for boating activities is required to possess, or be accompanied by staff who possess, [acceptable First Aid and CPR certifications](#).