

Teaching Survival Swimming to School-Age Children

The Lifesaving Society Alberta and Northwest Territories

The Lifesaving Society is celebrating its 125th Anniversary this year. Survival swimming is a landmark initiative for our Royal Life Saving Society (RLSS) Commonwealth 125th anniversary in 2016 and is also the focus of our 2016 Water Smart® campaign. The 2016 Water Smart® campaign and accompanying toolkit is designed to raise awareness about drowning and water-related injury prevention. This year's focus is providing barrier-free Swim to Survive® to the public. Swim to Survive® provides the essential minimum skills required to survive an unexpected fall into deep water and is a proven method to prevent drowning.

The WHO Global report on drowning: preventing a leading killer highlights that 372,000 people drown worldwide each year. Drowning is among the top five leading causes of death for people aged 1-14 years in Canada. *"Evidence shows that a range of interventions are effective at preventing drowning. Among others, these include the strategic use of barriers to control access to water, provision of safe places such as day care centres for pre-school children, and teaching school-age children basic swimming, water safety and safe rescue skills."*

The Lifesaving Society's Swim to Survive® program is simple, easy and an affordable way for schools to give students a meaningful swimming experience and provide them with essential water survival skills. The Safety Guidelines for Physical Activity in Alberta Schools provides instruction and supervision recommendations for Swim to Survive® (pool and/or open water activities).

Swim to Survive® keeps students engaged, moving and having fun and increases their physical literacy. Inclusion is a key element of the program design. The program is appropriate for all ages and skill levels. Anybody can learn and anyone from a school, community organization or aquatic facility can teach the program. The program can be taught to larger groups and can be done while students are wearing lifejackets. It can also be offered at a community waterfront or pool. Swim to Survive® can be delivered separately or as an added value to swimming lessons. For some children, participating in Swim to Survive® will be their first step to being safe around water. If every child in Alberta and the Northwest Territories knew how to Swim to Survive®, we could reduce the number of drownings by half.

The Lifesaving Society will be awarding 125 RLSS Commonwealth Service Certificates in Alberta and the Northwest Territories to organizations who provide a Swim to Survive® experience in 2016.

Swim to Survive® Skills

	Essential Water Survival Skills	Task
1	Orient oneself at the surface after an unexpected entry	Roll into deep water
2	Support oneself at the surface	Tread water for 1 minute
3	Swim to safety	Swim 50 meters

The Lifesaving Society encourages schools and community organizations to offer Swim to Survive® to provide students and community members with essential basic swimming, water safety and safe rescue skills, a proven method to prevent drowning.

For information about offering Swim to Survive® please contact the Lifesaving Society at (780) 415-1755 or email experts@lifesaving.org

Resources

- World Health Organization (2014) *Global report on drowning: preventing a leading killer*. Source: http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/143893/1/9789241564786_eng.pdf
- Lifesaving Society (2016). *Canadian Drowning Report 2016 Edition*. Source: [https://lifesaving.org/pdf_files/CanadianDrowningReport_ENGLISH_web%20\(6\).pdf](https://lifesaving.org/pdf_files/CanadianDrowningReport_ENGLISH_web%20(6).pdf)
- Safety Guidelines for Physical Activity in Alberta Schools (2013). Pages 31 & 32. Source: http://injurypreventioncentre.ca/documents/policies/SG_PA_Final_2014.pdf