

May 18, 2007

CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS FOR THERAPEUTIC AND RECREATIONAL SWIMMING POOL STAFF

1. PURPOSE: This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Directive defines the type and extent of qualifications necessary to conduct a safe treatment program in Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) therapeutic and recreational swimming pools.

2. BACKGROUND: Since aquatic safety training and retraining courses offered by the more predominant swimming pool certification program in the United States (the American Red Cross (ARC)) have changed in their respective titles, number of hours needed for certification, and scope, it is necessary to re-define VA qualifications in this particular treatment environment to ensure VHA's Aquatic Safety Program.

3. POLICY: It is VHA policy that every VA therapeutic or recreational swimming pool be under the direct supervision of an individual having current water safety credentials and that during the operation of these pools (whenever patients or employees are in the water) there is the physical presence of certified personnel. *NOTE: It is not recommended that VA Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (PM&RS) therapists or Recreation Therapy personnel serve in a life-guarding capacity, while conducting aquatic therapy, employee fitness, or general recreation swimming programs. All VA PM&RS Therapists and/or Recreation Therapy Personnel serving in a lifeguarding capacity must have the more advanced life guard training course or it's equivalent. Current VHA policy requires Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR), education as provided by the American Heart Association or other appropriate agency for all PM&RS and Recreation personnel who are involved in therapeutic or recreational swimming activities.*

4. ACTION: The medical facility Director, or designee, is responsible for ensuring:

a. All VA personnel responsible for conducting therapeutic and certain recreational or leisure activities (e.g., swimming instruction, aquatic exercise, employee fitness, small group game activities, etc.) using VA pool facilities, must successfully complete and maintain current credentials and competency as appropriate for the program provided. Available certifications and education programs are:

(1) ARC's Lifeguard Training,

(2) ARC's Basic Water Safety Instructor,

(3) Basic Water Rescue, and

(4) ARC's CPR and Automated External Defibrillation (AED) for the Professional Rescuer Training courses (or its equivalent from some other nationally recognized agency; e.g., Young

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Men's Christian Association (YMCA), American Safety and Health Institute, etc.). **NOTE:** *It is recommended that therapists involved in one-on-one or small group therapy programs pursue advanced training and/or certification in Aquatic Therapy techniques.*

- b. The facility adheres to its State Sanitary Code for Aquatic Certification purposes.
- c. There is always at least one appropriately qualified person, properly attired, in the immediate pool area when the pool is in use by patients. **NOTE:** *The ratio of such qualified personnel on duty at any one time to patients is dictated by local policy and with consideration of the types of impairments and physical limitations of the persons being served.*
- d. Funding is available for certification of therapists or other responsible swimming pool supervisors in Lifeguard Training, Water Safety Training, ARC's CPR-AED for the Professional Rescuer Training, or equivalent water safety training courses or advanced aquatic therapy training.
- e. Sanitation and mechanical supervision of VA swimming pools, which are used for therapeutic and recreational swimming purposes, meet VHA and local ordinance requirements and are in compliance with state laws and/or regulations governing the supervision of such pools.
- f. Persons certified as Swimming Pool Operator(s) follow all elements outlined in the swimming pool operations and maintenance program developed at the local facility.
- g. Persons assigned environmental management responsibilities maintain the pool area, locker rooms, and restrooms in a sanitary manner in accordance with established regulations, guidelines, and policies.
- h. Both the Swimming Pool Operator and Environmental Management staff are trained in the recognition of pool sanitation, operation problems and corrective actions that must be initiated or completed prior to authorized use.
- i. Immediately prior to the use of the pool, the Swimming Pool Operator in collaboration with the Lifeguard(s) verify in writing that pool conditions are safe for use with or without restrictions.
- j. External organizations allowed access to VHA Swimming Pools provide their own certified Lifeguards with current certificates of training. These current certificates of training must be provided to the facility Director, or designee, prior to approval for use of the pool. **NOTE:** *Facilities that have Child Care Programs, Day Care Programs, etc. provide their own certified Lifeguards with current certificates of training, which must be provided to the facility Director, or designee, prior to approval for use of the pool.*
- k. Chaplains utilizing the pool for baptismal services may be exempted from obtaining Lifeguard Certification and Water Safety Instructor requirements. However, when there are no chaplains properly certified it is recommended that local policy provide for a therapist

appropriately qualified in water safety to attend, but not participate in the baptismal service, unless specific assistance in handling of the person to be baptized is requested by Chaplain Service.

5. REFERENCES

- a. Website at: <http://www.redcross.org/services/hss/>
- b. d. Website at: www.atri.org

6. RESPONSIBILITY: The Director, Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Service (117C), is responsible for the contents of this Directive. Questions may be addressed to 612-752-2044.

7. RESCISSIONS: VHA Directive 2002-021 is rescinded. This VHA Directive expires on May 31, 2012.

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