



## Ready Guard Aquatic Safety Program – Safe Pool Network

### **Background:**

Children are the victims in nearly half (1,500) of all drownings in the US each year according to the Centers for Disease Control. Drowning is the second-leading cause of injury-related death for children ages 1 to 14 years with nearly half of those children drowning in guarded pools. In addition to drownings, five times as many children are victims of near-drowning incidents. It is estimated that victims were not initially identified by on-duty lifeguards in as many as 70% of aquatic incidents.

There have been 28 drownings and 67 near-drownings in YMCA pools during the last 5 years. 60% of these drownings occurred during a “special event” i.e. rental group, birthday party, etc. In a majority of YMCA incidents the victim was found by another guest, not the lifeguard on duty.

The following conclusions can be made after reviewing the statistical information above:

- Children are at great risk of being involved in an aquatic incident.
- A disproportionate number of drowning and near drowning incidents occur during special events.
- Victims identified by other participants indicate that proactive supervision and scanning are not regularly being practiced at aquatic venues.

The *Rescue Ready* program was created in 2004 by YMCA Services Corporation to address aquatic safety issues at YMCAs. The program has been successfully implemented in nearly a dozen YMCAs. The program has evolved with the needs of the movement and is now offered exclusively through Safe-Wise Consulting as the *Ready Guard* program.

### **Program Goals:**

The program utilizes a comprehensive approach to increase the level of aquatic safety with a focus on the following goals:

1. Gain association-wide commitment to aquatic safety and drowning prevention.
2. Ensure that thorough, proactive and sustainable aquatic safety practices are in place
3. Provide a heightened level of consistent aquatic vigilance from lifeguard staff regardless of their certification

## **Safe Pool Network:**

The Safe Pool Network is a program designed to develop a self-governing and sustainable method for encouraging Ready Guard Program concepts over a grouping or network of YMCAs. The program was developed in 2007 and follows the Ready Guard program goals to strengthen aquatic safety throughout the network. Each network is governed and monitored by network members after the initial program is implemented.

Each network member commits to providing high levels of aquatic safety and drowning prevention, with a focus on vigilance and victim recognition. The program will ensure that thorough, proactive and sustainable aquatic safety practices are in place throughout network locations. Members gain recognition of their commitment and efforts by attaining several levels of standards within the program and ultimately will attain the highest standard for recognition as a Safe Pool.

The program goals are attained through the implementation of the following practices:

- CEO and CVO commit to program through a signed Pledge that is renewed annually
- Each member completes a self-assessment on annual basis for each location
- Network members provide aquatic leaders that meet supervision and credential standards
- Network members meet standards for a high level of emergency preparedness
- Network members meet standards for aquatic leadership and safety training
- Network members meet standards for aquatic safety equipment
- Each location is accredited by the programs peer-review process
- Network members provide leadership to the peer-review process