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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Be a Lifeguard for Kids this Memorial Day

35 kids have already drowned in Texas this year

With the most dangerous time of year for child drownings - from Memorial Day to Labor Day - still ahead, 35 children have already drowned this year in Texas - nearly half last year's total of 75.

The Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) is calling on all Texans to "watch kids around water" this summer to prevent more tragedies.

"Drowning claims far too many children's lives and it's totally preventable," said Sasha Rasco, the chief of DFPS prevention programs. "We all have to be lifeguards for kids and never, ever let them out of sight or out of arm's reach around water."

Typically, apartment and backyard pools are the most dangerous for children, but so far this year the pattern has been diverse. While 12 children have drowned in pools, 17 more drowned in lakes, ponds, bays and other natural bodies of water. Children have also drowned in bathtubs, hot tubs, a fountain, and a septic tank. Children under the age of one most often drown inside the house, while older children most often drown outdoors. Most toddlers who drown are out of sight less than five minutes.

Harris County leads the state with seven child drownings so far this year, with five drownings recorded in Nueces County and three each in Denton and Tarrant counties.

To get the word out to parents and other caretakers, DFPS is expanding its child abuse prevention campaign (HelpandHope.org) to include water safety information, videos, tips for parents and daycare providers, and the child drowning information formerly found on WatchKidsAroundWater.org.

"It's a logical move to combine these campaigns because we reach far more parents through the Help for Parents, Hope for Kids campaign, and we have to reach as many parents as possible on this issue," said Rasco.

DFPS is currently running a \$1 million advertising campaign for the Help and Hope campaign and will be targeting about a fourth of those dollars to water safety messages from Memorial Day through September 30.

For more statistics and information on water safety for kids, visit WatchKidsAroundWater.org or HelpandHope.org

Basic Water Safety Tips

Inside the house

- Never leave small children alone near any container of water.
- Keep bathroom doors closed and secure toilet lids with lid locks.
- Never leave a baby alone in a bath for any reason. Get the things you need before running water, and take the child with you if you must leave the room.
- Warn babysitters or caregivers about the dangers of water and stress the need to constantly supervise young children.
- Make sure small children cannot leave the house through pet doors or unlocked doors and reach pools or hot tubs.

Outside the house

- Never leave children alone around water whether it is in a pool, wading pool, drainage ditch, creek, pond, or lake.
- Constantly watch children who are swimming or playing in water. They need an adult or certified lifeguard watching and within reach.
- Secure access to swimming pools with fences, self-closing and latching gates, and water surface alarms.
- Completely remove the pool cover when the pool is in use.
- Store water toys away from the water, when not in use, so they don't attract a small child.
- Don't assume young children will use good judgment around water.
- Be ready for emergencies. Keep emergency telephone numbers handy and learn CPR.
- Find out if your child's friends or neighbors have pools.