

# FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

## BILL ANALYSIS

*This bill analysis was prepared by nonpartisan committee staff and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.*

**BILL #:** [CS/HB 503](#)

**TITLE:** Drowning Prevention Education

**SPONSOR(S):** Eskamani

**COMPANION BILL:** None

**LINKED BILLS:** None

**RELATED BILLS:** [CS/SB 606](#) (Smith)

### Committee References

[Health Care Facilities & Systems](#)

18 Y, 0 N, As CS

## SUMMARY

### Effect of the Bill:

The bill requires the Department of Health to develop educational materials on drowning prevention safety measures and safe bathing practices. The bill requires hospitals, birth centers, home birth providers, and childbirth educators to provide the educational materials to parents and caregivers of newborns as part of their postpartum education and care.

### Fiscal or Economic Impact:

None

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## ANALYSIS

### EFFECT OF THE BILL:

The bill requires the Department of Health (DOH) to develop educational materials on drowning prevention safety measures and safe bathing practices to be distributed to parents and caregivers by hospitals, birth centers, home birth providers, and childbirth educators as part of postpartum or childbirth education. The bill requires the educational materials developed by DOH to include information on:

- The increased risk of drowning for infants and toddlers in bathtubs, pools, and other water sources, including available data on such drownings; and
- Water safety measures parents can employ to prevent drowning, emphasizing the importance of constant supervision of infants and children while they are around water and the benefits of early childhood swimming lessons and water competency programs as an added layer of protection from drownings.

The effective date of the bill is July 1, 2026.

**STORAGE NAME:** h0503.HFS

**DATE:** 2/12/2026

## RELEVANT INFORMATION

### SUBJECT OVERVIEW:

#### Accidental Drownings

##### *National Accidental Drownings*

On average, over 4,000 people lose their lives to drowning each year in the U.S. That is an average of 10 fatal drownings per day.<sup>1</sup> For children ages one to four, drowning is the leading cause of death in the U.S., and for children ages five to fourteen, drowning is the second leading cause of unintentional injury death.<sup>2</sup>

Drowning is also the leading cause of accidental death in Florida for children ages five and under.<sup>3</sup> In 2023, 94 children died in Florida from accidental drowning.<sup>4</sup> According to the Centers for Disease Control's national injury data, in 2018 - 2020, Florida ranked highest in the country for unintentional drowning death rates for children ages zero to nine and third for children ages zero to 17.<sup>5</sup> According to the Department of Children and Families (DCF), teaching children water safety skills is important in reducing the number child drownings.<sup>6,7</sup>

##### *Florida Accidental Drownings*

Since 2005, Florida has experienced between approximately 350 and 500 drowning deaths annually, averaging roughly two deaths per 100,000 residents statewide. Young children aged four and under, however, face a significantly higher risk, drowning at a rate of approximately six per 100,000 population — nearly three times the overall average. Similarly, children ages one to seven drown at a rate of around five per 100,000. In 2024, this age group accounted for 87 of the state's 452 total drowning deaths, representing nearly 20 percent of the fatalities.

#### Drowning Prevention

The National Drowning Prevention Alliance (NDPA) recommends five steps for protecting children from drowning, which the NDPA refers to as “5 layers of protection.” They include: barriers and alarms, supervision, water competency, life jackets, and emergency preparation.<sup>8</sup>

##### *Barriers and Alarms*

According to the NDPA, 70 percent of child drownings happen during non-swim times.<sup>9</sup> Many types of fences can help prevent children from accessing a pool area when the children are not being supervised. Additionally, certain

<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Drowning Data*, available at <https://www.cdc.gov/drowning/data-research/index.html> (last visited February 10, 2026).

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> Florida Department of Health, Seminole County, *Guide to Drowning Prevention*, available at <https://seminole.floridahealth.gov/programs-and-services/environmental-health/drowning-prevention.html>, (last visited February 10, 2026).

<sup>4</sup> Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF), *Child Fatality Prevention; Statewide Data*, available at <https://www2.myflfamilies.com/childfatality/stateresults.shtml?minage=0&maxage=18&year=2023&cause=Drowning&prior12=&verified>, (last visited February 10, 2026).

<sup>5</sup> Florida Department of Health (DOH), *Drowning Prevention*, available at [https://www.floridahealth.gov/programs-and-services/prevention/drowning-prevention/index.html#:~:text=Florida%20had%20the%20highest%20unintentional,\(CDC%20national%20injury%20data\),](https://www.floridahealth.gov/programs-and-services/prevention/drowning-prevention/index.html#:~:text=Florida%20had%20the%20highest%20unintentional,(CDC%20national%20injury%20data),), (last visited February 10, 2026).

<sup>6</sup> DCF, *Water Safety for Kids*, available at [https://www.myflfamilies.com/services/\\_child-family/child-and-family-well-being/summer-safety-tips/water-safety/water-safety-kids](https://www.myflfamilies.com/services/_child-family/child-and-family-well-being/summer-safety-tips/water-safety/water-safety-kids), (last visited February 10, 2026).

<sup>7</sup> Florida Health Charts, *Deaths from Unintentional Drowning*, available at <https://www.flhealthcharts.gov/ChartsDashboards/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=Death.DataViewer&cid=0105> (last visited February 10, 2026).

<sup>8</sup> National Drowning Prevention Alliance, *Learn the 5 Layers of Protection*, available at <https://ndpa.org/layers/> (last visited February 10, 2026).

covers and safety nets can prevent children from falling into a pool. Lastly, many types of alarms exist that can alert parents when the pool area or the pool itself has been accessed without permission and supervision.<sup>10</sup>

### *Supervision*

The NDPA provides several recommendations for supervision of children around pools and bodies of water. These include having general house rules about not leaving children unattended and reminding guests, babysitters, and caregivers about pool hazards and the need for constant supervision. Lastly, the NDPA recommends active supervision while swimming and participating in water activities and using a water watcher, i.e. a person whose sole responsibility is watching over the children in and near the water, or a lifeguard during water-centered gatherings.<sup>11</sup>

### *Water Competency*

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends starting swim lessons as early as age one. Research shows that children ages one through four can reduce their drowning risk up to 88 percent if enrolled in formal lessons. The NDPA recommends making sure that the swim instruction includes water safety and survival education at the appropriate developmental level.<sup>12</sup>

### *Life Jackets*

The NDPA recommends that everyone wear a life jacket or personal flotation device (PFD) approved by the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) whenever boating or in a natural or open body of water. The NDPA indicates it is important that the life jacket is USCG approved and fitted for the individual. Not all devices sold by retailers are tested and approved flotation devices. Devices that are not tested and approved cannot be considered a safe layer of protection and should not be part of a family's water safety plan, according to the NDPA.<sup>13</sup>

### *Emergency Readiness*

The NDPA recommends that adults participating in water activities when children are involved have an emergency plan, including keeping a phone near the pool or swimming area with the ability to call 911 for help if needed. Additionally, parents and others who live in homes with pools should learn and practice cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and there should be at least one person who knows CPR at any large gathering where water is involved. Lastly, pool owners and operators may enroll in water safety courses that teach proper rescue techniques.<sup>14</sup>

## Water Safety Initiatives in Florida

### *Swimming Lesson Voucher Program*

The Swimming Lesson Voucher Program, operated by DOH, offers vouchers for swimming lessons, at no cost, to families with an income of up to 200 percent of the federal poverty level with children age four or younger.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>9</sup> National Drowning Alliance, *The Five Layers of Protection*, p. 2, available at <https://ndpa.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/FINAL-LOP-Brochure.pdf> (last visited February 10, 2026).

<sup>10</sup> *Id.* at pp. 3-6.

<sup>11</sup> *Id.* at p. 2.

<sup>12</sup> *Id.* at p. 8.

<sup>13</sup> National Drowning Prevention Alliance, *Life Jackets*, available at <https://ndpa.org/life-jackets/> (last visited February 10, 2026).

<sup>14</sup> *Supra* note 10 at p. 10.

<sup>15</sup> Based on the 2026 federal poverty guidelines, a family of four falls within the 200 percent poverty level if their annual income is \$66,000 or less. See Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *2024 Federal Poverty Guidelines: 48 Contiguous States*, available at <https://aspe.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/b1bfa16b20ae9b89d525bc35de7c1643/detailed-guidelines-2026.pdf> (last visited February 10, 2026).

*Public School Efforts*

In Florida, public schools are required to provide parents initially enrolling their children in school with information on the important role water safety education courses and swimming lessons play in saving lives by helping to prevent drownings.<sup>16</sup> The information provided must include local options for age-appropriate water safety courses and swimming lessons that result in a certificate indicating successful completion. Information on courses and lessons offered for free or at a reduced price must also be included.<sup>17</sup>

*Eyes on the Kids and Water Safety for Kids Initiatives*

DCF along with several state and local partners, launched the Eyes on the Kids and Water Safety for Kids initiatives to help reduce child drowning fatalities in Florida.<sup>18</sup> The Eyes on the Kids initiative encourages parents to practice the four water safety rules: supervision, barriers, swimming lessons and emergency preparedness. The Water Safety for Kids initiative provides short water safety presentations to elementary schools, book store story times, child care centers, libraries, summer camps, etc. The presentations can include reading water safety books, puppet shows, coloring sheets, costumed characters, and giveaways of small water safety items such as beach balls, stickers, and book marks.<sup>19</sup>

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**BILL HISTORY**

COMMITTEE REFERENCE	ACTION	DATE	STAFF DIRECTOR/ POLICY CHIEF	ANALYSIS PREPARED BY
<a href="#">Health Care Facilities &amp; Systems Subcommittee</a>	18 Y, 0 N, As CS	2/12/2026	Lloyd	Guzzo
THE CHANGES ADOPTED BY THE COMMITTEE:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Removed the record keeping requirements proposed by the bill.</li> </ul>			

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**THIS BILL ANALYSIS HAS BEEN UPDATED TO INCORPORATE ALL OF THE CHANGES DESCRIBED ABOVE.**  
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<sup>16</sup> S. 1003.225, F.S.

<sup>17</sup> *Id.*

<sup>18</sup> DCF, *Water Safety*, available at <https://www.myflfamilies.com/services/child-family/child-and-family-well-being/summer-safety-tips/water-safety>, (last visited January 18, 2024).

<sup>19</sup> *Id.*