



May 5, 2020

RE: Public Health Need to Open Swim Schools and Learn-to-Swim Programs

Dear Governor Polis,

We are writing to ask you to consider the serious public health need to open swim schools and learn-to-swim programs in the current businesses set to reopen.

Private swim schools in Colorado educate tens of thousands of children per week to learn to swim, providing critical water safety skills which is proven to reduce the drowning rate. This is particularly important as we approach summer, where kids are spending more time around bodies of water. Below you will find a letter from the US Swim School Association, detailing the risks involved in not being able to provide lessons to children.

Unlike public pools, which have many different uses akin to a commercial building, our programs are controlled learning environments. Our schools are more like personal training facilities, where lessons are by appointment only and we are easily able to control the number of people in our facility at any time. We do not run recreation swim or large groups like many city pools do. We understand that modifications will need to be put in place once swim schools/learn-to-swim programs reopen and are committed to doing so.

We are actively working on putting together a plan, following Colorado guidelines for social distancing and reopening, in order to create a safe environment for our families. While an instructor needs to stay within a reachable distance from a non-swimmer in the water, they can still use protective face gear, and we can ensure social distancing within all other aspects of our facilities. We plan on conducting health screening, including checking temperatures, ensuring a limited number of people in our facilities at a given time, disinfecting between lessons, and setting up other protocols to ensure minimal points of contact.

As fellow parents of young children, we hope you will agree that teaching swimming is essential to keeping our children safe. If you have any questions, we would be more than happy to answer them, please contact Daphna Kapnik at daphna@littlekickersco.com, or 303-524-5662.

Jon Alpert
Waterworks Aquatics, Denver

Daphna Kapnik and Yael Miller
Little Kickers Swim School, Denver



April 29, 2020

RE: Public Health Need to Open Swim Schools and Learn-to-Swim Programs

Dear Governor Polis,

We are writing to ask you to consider the serious public health need to open swim schools and learn-to-swim programs in Stage 2 of businesses to reopen.

As you know, learning to swim is a life-or-death skill, essential for every child. Formal swim lessons between ages 1 and 4 can help reduce the risk of drowning by 88% according to a study conducted in 2015.¹ Drowning is the number one cause of death for children ages 1 to 4 and a leading cause for young people up to 14 years of age.² We believe drowning to be at an even higher risk now as the schools, daycares and other children's activities are currently closed. This gives children more time to find a body of water such as a backyard pool, neighbor's pool, community pool, inflatable pool, sink, toilet, filled bathtub, bucket, ditches filled with rainwater, ocean, lakes, and rivers. A young child can drown in less than 2 inches of water.³

Meanwhile, parents have even more distractions than ever, including remote working while children are home and are unable to supervise their children at all times. Even before this pandemic, 9 out of 10 child related drowning deaths happened when a caregiver was supervising.⁴ 69% of children who drowned were not expected to be at or in the pool, yet they were found in the water and 77% of drowning victims had been out of sight for less than five minutes.⁵

Unlike public pools, our programs are controlled learning environments. We understand that modifications will need to be put in place once swim schools/learn-to-swim programs reopen. While an instructor needs to stay within a reachable distance from a nonswimmer, we are committed to taking concrete steps to ensure social distancing within all other aspects of our facilities.

There is no way to teach water survival or swim skills remotely, and the health risk from COVID-19 in instructional settings should be very low. According to the CDC, the chlorine/bromine in our swimming pools should inactivate the virus in the water. Chlorine/bromine is a disinfectant. There is no evidence that the virus

¹ Association Between Swimming Lessons and Drowning in Childhood, A Case-Control Study: Ruth Brenner, et al., 2015 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4151293/>

² <https://www.aap.org/en-us/about-the-aap/aap-press-room/campaigns/drowning-prevention/Pages/default.aspx>

³ https://downloads.aap.org/DOPA/Drowning-Prevention/is_your_baby_crawling_english.pdf

⁴ Research from National SAFEKIDS campaign, <https://www.cnn.com/2004/HEALTH/05/27/drowning/>

⁵ Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) <https://www.momsteam.com/sports/swimming/safety/grim-statistics-on-child-drownings>

that causes COVID-19 can be spread to people through the water in pools. The industry is working to establish best practices, and we are willing to engage in a science-based dialogue with health officials regarding which measures would be appropriate for learn-to-swim programs.

As a fellow parent of young children, we hope you will agree that teaching swimming is essential to keeping our children safe. If you have any questions, we would be more than happy to answer them, please contact Lisa Zarda, executive director for the United States Swim School Association at lisa@usswimschools.org or 480-447-4987. We look forward to working together to reduce the risks to our children and communities. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Signatories

Lisa M. Zarda, CAE
Executive Director
United States Swim School Association

Adam B. Katchmarchi, Ph.D., EMT-B
Executive Director
National Drowning Prevention Alliance

Sabeena Hickman, CAE
President & CEO
Pool & Hot Tub Alliance

Michelle Kavanaugh
Executive Director
California Pool & Spa Association

Christy Bostic
Executive Director
Hope Floats Foundation

Jim Speirs
President
Stop Drowning Now