

Injury Prevention Program Helps Advance a Unified Plan for Water Safety in California

Each year, more than 500 Californians die due to drowning. And for each drowning fatality, three additional drowning injuries are treated at an emergency department or hospital, sometimes resulting in lifelong disability. Each of these injuries incurs complex emotional, economic, and societal costs. While drownings are preventable, the diversity of settings, risk factors, and interventions can be a challenge for unified and comprehensive prevention efforts.

To address this challenge, CDPH's Injury Prevention Program (IPP), with the support of the Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant, worked extensively with the California Water Safety Coalition (CWSC) to publish the California Water Safety Strategy (CA-WSS). The CA-WSS is the state's first comprehensive plan to prevent drowning (1). It serves as an alignment document that highlights major priorities and action areas for water safety. The document was developed from over two years of stakeholder consultation and research. IPP staff contributed through serving on the CWSC advisory committee and data subcommittee. Fatal and Non-fatal drowning statistics used in the CA-WSS to understand the problem were sourced from EpiCenter (2), IPP's online injury data dashboard, as well as original research on fatal drownings in the state. The original research was also published in the peer-review journal, *Injury Prevention*, in an article co-authored by IPP staff titled, "Burden of fatal drowning in California, 2005–2019" (3).

The CA-WSS was released at the 2023 California Water Safety Strategy in San Diego with more than 150 drowning prevention stakeholders in attendance. At the summit, IPP staff presented on the public health approach to drowning prevention and shared drowning data for the state. The summit culminated in IPP staff taking part in a televised proclamation to designate May as Water Safety and Drowning Prevention Month in San Diego.

Footnotes

1. California Water Safety Coalition (2023) California Water Safety Strategy. California Water Safety Coalition, Huntington Beach. Available from: <https://www.cawatersafety.org/strategy>.
2. California Department of Public Health, Injury and Violence Prevention Branch. (2022, December 15). *EpiCenter: California Injury Data Online*. Available from: <https://skylab4-dev.cdph.ca.gov/epicenter/>.
3. Koon W, Stewart O, Brander R, et al (2023) Burden of fatal drowning in California, 2005–2019. *Injury Prevention*. Available from: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/ip-2023-044862>.

*Federal Fiscal Year 2022 Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant Success
Story by the Injury Prevention Program*