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## Efforts in the State of Texas to Reduce Drownings and Submersion Injuries

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### **Background**

Drowning continues to be one of the leading causes of unintentional deaths in Texas with over approximately 350-400 drownings annually or a rate of approximately 1.4 drownings per 100,000 population. Texas is the second largest state geographically in the United States of America with steadily growing population of over 28.4 million citizens. In Texas, drowning is the second leading cause of unintentional injury-related death for children ages 1 to 14. Each year up to 100 children die as a result from drowning in Texas. It is estimated that four times that number receive emergency department care for nonfatal submersion injuries.

### **Drowning Tracking Systems Available in Texas**

Currently the State of Texas has several agencies tracking submersion injuries and drowning-related deaths for children, teenagers, and adults in the state. One tracking systems is compiled by the Texas Department of State Health Services, Environmental Epidemiology and Surveillance Branch which tracks the surveillance and reporting of submersion injuries through the EMS & Trauma Registries and shares the results of data collection through presentations and a report for the benefit of public health and safety. Drowning continues to be a major public health issue for all communities across this large state and is one of a few states with a separate submersion registry.

In 2014, there were 420 submersions including 67 deaths due to submersion reported to the submersion registry. This information is collected through hospital, medical examiners, physicians, and local county health departments. Approximately 80% of the submersions occurred to children 14 years and younger with the greatest percentage (60%) of submersions in the 1- to 4-year-old age range. Over 40% of submersion injuries occurred in pools and spas and of these submersions over 50% were in single family residence or multifamily residence.

Additional tracking of fatal drownings of children 14 and under is provided by the Texas Department of Family Protective Services that reports drownings across the State of Texas which occur to children between the ages of 1 to 17. This information is updated and reported by this department on its web site and provides water safety resources and information for parents and care givers as well as estimated yearly statistics of fatal drownings across the State of Texas by geographic counties, age and location of the drowning events. Texas currently has approximately 70 child drownings this year as of August 2018.

Additional tracking systems from aquatic and water safety agencies, newspapers, media outlets resources, and other State of Texas government agencies also track and report on drownings across the State of Texas in various aquatic environments.

For the purpose of this presentation we will be discussing the State of Texas Health Services submersion injury reporting and the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services reports statistics and the public water safety initiatives and efforts by the state, county and city agencies, water safety advocates and non-profit drowning prevention organizations and coalitions across the Lone Star state to reduce these submersion injuries and drownings.

### **Interventions**

A sampling of collaborative efforts by various public safety agencies and advocate organization's strategies, programs, and public awareness campaigns to battle and help reduce the fatal drownings and submersion injuries in the various aquatic environments across the State of Texas for its twenty-eight million citizens with be presented. Community and state level coalitions, projects and programs at the local and state level drowning prevention projects, meetings and water safety programs will be presented to address the 350-400 drownings that occur across the state of Texas annually and show how these agencies and coalitions work together to increase the public water safety awareness and education to increase water survival from these submersion injuries and events.

### **Conclusions**

Drownings in the State of Texas are a multifaceted public safety issue that continues to be researched and addressed with multiple prevention strategies, programs, projects at the community and state level. Public education and outreach strategies must continue to increase public water safety awareness in an effort to reduce the number of submersion injuries and fatal drownings across the state.



Kim W. Tyson, B.S., M.S., graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Health and Physical Education, and a Master of Science in Sports & Exercise Science, with an emphasis in Aquatic Administration from Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Mr. Tyson has served for the past thirty-five years as state and national Aquatic Consultant across the United States and as the Aquatic Coordinator and Professional Educator for State of Texas at the University of Texas at Austin in the Department of Kinesiology and Health Education from 1983-2013. Kim Tyson has worked and consulted with the American Red Cross, the United States Lifesaving Association, universities, colleges, government agencies, water safety and drowning prevention coalitions, parks and recreational departments, and fitness and wellness centers in California, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Mississippi, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas and Virginia. Mr. Tyson is involved in the area of developing and supporting aquatic safety and drowning prevention instruction and outreach programs that increase public safety through research, education and awareness at the community, state, national and international level.