



Sample In-Service Training

Challenging Conversations

It is important to practice difficult scenarios with your lifeguards. This will help them feel empowered and prepared to confidently and assertively address adults, or large groups of people, to reinforce rules. Reflect on the following:

- What messages were hard to deliver to youth, members or families this past week?
- What did your staff struggle with, or receive push back on?

Based on how you answered these questions, role play conversations between the guard and a member, and discuss ways for guards to enforce rules appropriately. Below is a common scenario where we see lifeguards have difficulty.

Scenario

A mom and her two kids arrive at the pool with a few other families. The mom states that her children are great swimmers and don't need to take the swim test. After some conversation between the mom and the lifeguard, both children take the swim test. One child does not pass and is told they either need to wear a PFD, or the mom needs to get in the water and be in arms reach of them. The mom didn't plan to swim and says her child doesn't need to wear a PFD. The guard patiently explains the pools rules, and the mom gets in to the water. After a while, she gets distracted and begins talking with the other families. The child slowly finds their way into deeper water, and you notice that they are struggling to keep their head above water.

- Have the lifeguards practice what their response will be to this parent when she says that her children don't need to take the swim test
- Have the lifeguards practice how they will reinforce your non-swimmer protection policies
- Complete a start-to-finish drill of rescuing the non-swimmer from the deeper water

Keep the following in mind when practicing difficult conversations with guards:

- Lead with empathy instead of confrontation
- Listen to understand
- Explain the policy and how it ties to your organization's mission
- If it escalates, bring to a manager on duty