Sample In-Service Training
Extended Breath Holding

Extended breath holding is a common practice among aquatic athletes, military trainees and youth. It is extremely dangerous. They can become deprived of oxygen before it sends a warning signal to the brain, causing the victim to succumb to shallow water blackout before they ever get the urge to breathe. Below are a few things to make sure that you educate your guards on:

- Discuss the signs that your lifeguards can look for so that intervention is possible.
- Empower guards to intervene whenever they see these behaviors from anyone in the pool. Management should clearly communicate their support of the lifeguards in the enforcement of this policy.
- Remind guards that no one is safe from experiencing shallow water blackout. It typically involves well-conditioned swimmers and it occurs without warning.

Below we have created a scenario that you can use with your staff. Please feel free to print this off and use during your in-service training.

Scenario

A small group of kids are attending open swim at your pool. While in the water, the group begins to play games that involve extended breath holding. They are all timing to see who can stay underwater the longest and playing tea party on the bottom of the pool. The lifeguard who is responsible for the area where the kids are playing continues to reinforce your pool's rules on no extended breath holding games. However, when it is time to rotate positions, the lifeguard forgets to communicate to the incoming guard the risky behaviors they have noticed from this group of kids. After some time passes, and the games continue, one of the kids begins to experience a shallow water blackout event.

- Time how long it takes the guard to identify the kid and initiate the first breath. This is crucial when someone has been without oxygen.
- Once a response is initiated, rehearse a complete rescue scenario.
- Debrief the experience with the guard. Some sample questions can be found on our website.

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