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Karen L. Smith, MD, MPH, Director and State Public Health Officer
California Department of Public Health
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RE: Four-Sided Pool Barriers- Support for 2016 Legislation

Dear Dr. Smith:

The California Conference of Local Health Officers (CCLHO) Board of Directors voted to recommend support for 2016 legislation to amend California statute to require a four-sided isolation fence that separates the pool area from a house and yard. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), a four-sided isolation fence reduces a child's risk of drowning 83% compared to three-sided property-line fencing.¹ CCLHO urges the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) to support such legislation as well.

In California, drowning is a leading cause of injury-related deaths among children under the age of five. Near-drowning incidents result in life-long disabilities, such as such as memory problems, learning disabilities, and permanent loss of basic functioning (e.g. permanent vegetative state). On a national level, about one in five people who die from drowning are children 14 and younger. For every child who dies from drowning, another five receive emergency department care for nonfatal submersion injuries. Children ages 1 to 4 have the highest drowning rates nationally, with drowning responsible for more deaths among this age group than any other cause except for congenital anomalies.

This position is consistent with CCLHO's Criteria for Priority Legislation in that it addresses a population-health issue with the potential to significantly impact years of life lost (YLL) by preventing early childhood deaths, and addresses the safety of young children who are a vulnerable population.

As you know, the California Conference of Local Health Officers (CCLHO) is an organization of all legally appointed physician health officers in California's 61 city and county jurisdictions established in statute in 1947 to consult with, advise, and make recommendations to the California Department of Public Health, other departments, and the Legislature on matters affecting health.

If you have questions, please contact me at jberreman@ci.berkeley.ca.us or at 510-981-5301. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Janet Berreman, MD, MPH
President, California Conference of Local Health Officers

¹ <http://www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreationalSafety/Water-Safety/waterinjuries-factsheet.html>