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TO PREVENT DROWNING, PRACTICE TOUCH SUPERVISION

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Sanford, Fla. – The Florida Department of Health in Seminole County (DOH-Seminole) promotes the proven lifesaving practice of “touch supervision” to prevent drowning. “Touch supervision” means an adult is always at arm’s length of a child who is in or near water.

According to the Florida Department of Health’s Office of Injury Prevention, Florida leads the country in drowning deaths of children between the ages of 1 and 4. In 2014, drowning was the cause of death of 1,103 Florida residents, 20 of whom lived in Seminole County. Drowning deaths are often associated with swimming pools and natural/open water, but they may also happen in bathtubs, toilets, buckets, and wading pools.

“Research has shown that touch supervision is the most effective way to prevent drowning in children,” said Dr. Swannie Jett, Health Officer for DOH-Seminole. “It is a practice supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the Florida Pediatric Society.”

Dr. Jett explained that "watching" is inadequate to prevent drowning, because the “watcher” may not be close enough to the pool to provide assistance. However, with “touch supervision,” the parent is actually sitting on the side of the pool or in the water within "an arm's length" from the child. Touch supervision should be practiced even in situations where a lifeguard is present. A physically capable adult should always remain within an arm’s reach to ensure the safety of children around bathtubs, wading pools, swimming pools, and natural bodies of water.

In addition to practicing touch supervision, the CDC recommends the use of these guidelines:

- Fence it off. Install a four-sided isolation fence, with self-closing and self-latching gates, around backyard swimming pools. This can help keep children away from the area when a parent cannot supervise them.
- Make life jackets a “must.” Make sure kids wear life jackets in and around natural bodies of water, such as lakes or the ocean, even if they know how to swim. Water wings, noodles, inner tubes or any other air-filled or foam toys are not designed to keep swimmers safe.
- Learn CPR. Learn cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and get recertified every two years. CPR can help a child stay alive with little or no brain damage.

Find more information at www.SeminoleCoHealth.com or at www.cdc.gov/SafeChild/Drowning/index.html.

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