

About Our Methods

Analysis of Personal Flotation Device Policies in 10 States

Project Objective

To collate and assess existing personal flotation device (PFD) policies in 10 states - Alaska, Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Michigan, New York, Oklahoma and Texas.

Methods

The project team conducted a comprehensive assessment and collation of enacted state-level policies regarding PFD use for recreational water activities.

Data Collection and Management

One team member used the Westlaw Edge library to search for existing (current as of June 30, 2024) state-level PFD policies in 10 states - Alaska, Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Michigan, New York, Oklahoma and Texas.

State policies including statutes and regulations were identified using the search strings "lifejacket" or "personal flotation device". After an initial review and content analysis of the identified legal documents, only relevant documents with the legislation of interest were included. PFD policies relating to competitive sporting activities or commercial use such as fishing were excluded from the assessment.

A second team member conducted a sensitivity test by randomly selecting five of the 10 states to search for relevant policies and comparing findings. The final scoped results remained the same. When available, Westlaw results were compared to publicly available PFD policies on state or legislative websites as a secondary source of data validation.

A total of 377 legal documents were reviewed and 289 were excluded because they did not include relevant policies. The remaining 88 legal documents were included for assessment and then uploaded to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Public Health Law Information Portal for coding and validation.

Coding and Validation

To ensure the important components of each policy were reviewed, the two team members used feedback from drowning prevention subject matter experts and findings from a literature review on evidence-based interventions to guide the development of a codebook. The major thematic areas that emerged were the type of PFD required onboard, length of vessel to which the policy applies, PFD requirements for children, PFD requirements for recreational boating activities and enforcement.

Two team members reviewed and independently coded the policies from the 10 states. The two team members resolved discrepancies through a discussion to reach consensus.

Analysis

The results of the coding were exported as an Excel spreadsheet and cleaned. Findings were summarized in a table. A "notes" column for each jurisdiction was added to document additional information that was not captured in the standardized thematic results. This legal mapping process identified key features of each state's PFD policy and how they varied across the 10 states.

Glossary

Personal Flotation Device (PFD):

A piece of safety equipment designed to keep a person afloat in water by providing buoyancy. A PFD can be wearable or throwable.

Life jacket:

A type of wearable PFD.

About Our Methods

Analysis of Residential Swimming Pool Fencing Policies at the County and City Level in 10 States

Project Objective

To collate and assess existing residential pool fencing policies in 10 states - Alaska, Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Michigan, New York, Oklahoma and Texas.

Methods

The project team conducted a comprehensive assessment and collation of county and city ordinances regarding residential pool fencing in 10 states - Alaska, Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Michigan, New York, Oklahoma and Texas. Pool fencing ordinances relating to public and semi-public pools were excluded from the assessment.

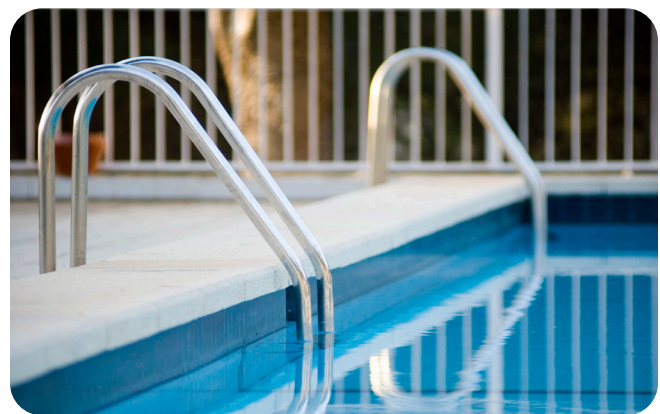
Data Collection and Management

Local jurisdictions derive their authority from the state, and local ordinances cannot conflict with state law. Team members conducted a review to understand which participating states had pre-emption clauses. Arizona, California and Florida enacted pre-emption clauses. The pre-emption clause sets the state-level requirements for residential pool fencing barriers that local ordinances must adhere to, however the local ordinance can be more strict.

One team member searched the CivicPlus Municode Library for existing residential pool fencing ordinances in the 10 states.

The Municode Library database search was conducted from July 2024 to July 2025 using the following terms: "swimming pool", "building code", "adopted reference" and "construction code". An initial review and content analysis of the identified Municode legal documents was completed, and only relevant documents with the legislation of interest were included.

A total of 2,098 legal documents were included for assessment and uploaded to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Public Health Law Information Portal for coding and validation.



Coding and Validation

To ensure the important components of the policies were reviewed, team members used feedback from drowning prevention subject matter experts and findings from a literature review on evidence-based interventions to guide the development of the codebook. The major thematic areas that emerged were the type of pool fencing, fence height and type of gate.

Two team members coded the ordinances along thematic areas, but due to the large volume of reviewed pool fencing ordinances, a primary team member exclusively coded all the jurisdictions and only a subset of the jurisdictions were coded by the second team member. The team members coded jurisdictions with a 100 percent rate of redundancy until their rate of divergence was less than five percent. Team members then dropped the rate of redundancy to 50 percent in the next round of coding. When the rate of divergence was less than five percent in the second round of coding, the team members subsequently dropped the rate of redundant coding once more to 20 percent through the remainder of the coding rounds, provided the divergence rate remained less than five percent. The two team members resolved discrepancies through a discussion to reach consensus.

Analysis

The results of the coding were exported as an Excel spreadsheet and cleaned. Findings were summarized in a table. A “notes” column for each jurisdiction was added to document additional information that was not captured in the standardized thematic results table. This legal mapping process identified key features of residential pool fencing ordinances and how they varied across and within the 10 states.