

## **WATER POLICY**

Water activities, including swimming, wading, boating, and any other activities conducted in and around bodies of water, are inherently dangerous.

In accordance with The Experiment Conditions of Participation, some activities are expressly prohibited, and any activities deemed potentially dangerous to individual or group safety are not permitted and could be grounds for dismissal. Any water activity that is not specifically listed on The Experiment Program itinerary is deemed potentially dangerous and is not permitted, except under the limited conditions outlined below.

### **Experiment Pre-approved Water Activities**

Water activities that are specifically listed on the program itinerary provided to The Experiment in a timely manner are subject to review. Once approved, these activities must be supervised by a group leader and/or a lifeguard or otherwise qualified individual with access to safety equipment. Partners must be familiar with the location and have determined that, with adequate supervision, the location is safe for the water activity. In addition, water activities must follow the guidelines below in all cases.

### **Off-itinerary Water Activities**

The Experiment recognizes that during its programs, Experimenters may want to engage in water activities recreationally. Group Leaders must assess the activity using Experiment guidelines and consult with local partners and their co-leader(s) in order to determine whether it is safe to allow off-itinerary recreational swimming, wading or other water activity, and must follow the guidelines below in all cases. The Experiment must be informed of participation in any off-itinerary water activities as soon as possible.

### **Guidelines for all Water Activities**

- a. **Swimming abilities.** Group leaders must conduct a verbal survey of each student's individual swimming abilities during program orientation and document the results. Experimenters and leaders who do not know how to swim or who identify as not being strong swimmers may not be in water greater than knee-deep without wearing an approved personal flotation device / life jacket. The only exception to this rule is wading in enclosed swimming pools attended by a lifeguard – in this circumstance; non-swimmers may enter the water up to their waists.
- b. **Survey the scene.** Immediately prior to group swimming, leaders should consider the proposed swimming site (including swimming pools) and consult with local partners and/or The Experiment before entering the water. This assessment could include evaluation of currents, tides, wildlife, geology, local knowledge and depth, etc.
- c. **Be conservative.** If leaders or local partners have any reservations at all about swimming at a location, find another place that has fewer hazards or postpone the outing.

#### **The Experiment**

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- d. **Water conditions.** Wading or swimming in moving water may only be done in water in which one can safely stand up. Swimming in enclosed swimming pools or other bodies of water attended by a lifeguard, or itinerary-specific outings facilitated by trained guides such as snorkeling or boating are permitted. Swimming or wading is prohibited on beaches where the current is swift, where there are known riptides, or the area is locally or generally regarded as being unsafe. Experimenters and leaders should recognize that currents and undertows are often unpredictable and not visible. Experimenters and leaders are required to leave the water **immediately** if there is any sign of these types of hazards. Swimming, not wading, in rivers and oceans must be part of an approved activity on the itinerary, or approved by The Experiment prior to the activity.
- e. **Supervision.** Experimenters and leaders should **never swim alone**. A group leader must be present at all times when Experimenters are in the water as a group. Experimenters may not swim alone while in a homestay and an adult must be present.
- f. **Swimming pools.** The use of swimming pools in hotels and during homestays is allowed as long as all the guidelines in this document are followed, including Supervision (Section d) and the rules of the swimming facility.
- g. **Swimming while in homestays.** Leaders and partners should brief homestay parents on Experiment water guidelines contained in this document, as well as the Experimenters' swimming abilities; families should be advised of weak or non-swimmers. A homestay parent must be present for Experimenters to swim, and the same assessment of water safety guidelines should be conducted by said adults.
- h. **Safety Discussion.** Each leader must discuss his/her assessment and the known hazards, water conditions, and activity limitations with students prior to entering the water.
- i. **Emergency response & Equipment.** Emergency lifesaving services must be available within reasonable proximity and a rescue device (improvised or otherwise) must be available at all times on Experiment-sponsored water activities. This may require planning and purchase of a rescue device. Improvised rescue devices could include a ring buoy, cooler-top, pool noodle, log, etc.
- j. **No alcohol.** Alcohol consumption and possession is not permitted at any time.
- k. **Rescue.** Neither program Experimenters **nor** leaders may attempt to swim out to rescue a person who may be drowning unless they are certified lifeguards or trained water rescuers. Instead, bystanders should call immediately for emergency response and try to reach the victim with thrown safety devices, if available.
- l. **Distance from shore.** Swimmers must stay close enough to shore that someone could throw them a rescue device if necessary.

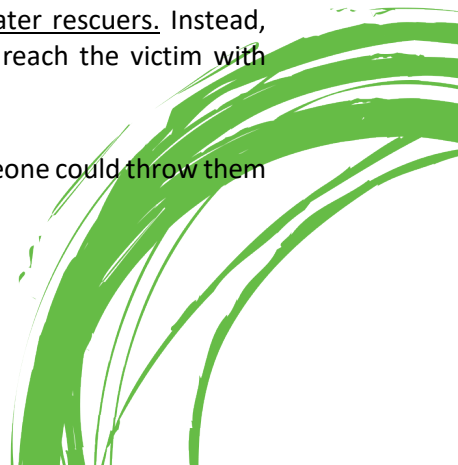
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- m. **Diving, jumping.** The countless dangers inherent in running into, jumping into, or diving into water can result in head and spinal injuries, paralysis, and even death. Leaders must educate Experimenters that all of these activities are prohibited.
- n. **Running.** Leaders must let Experimenters know they are prohibited from running near bodies of water. At many locations, terrain may be uneven or rocky, putting Experimenters at risk of turning an ankle or taking a fall by entering an area where there is a rapid drop off.
- o. **Cold Water.** Leaders must be particularly mindful that exposure to cold water for long periods of time can cause hypothermia, a condition which can cause the loss of motor skills, resulting in drowning.
- p. **Lightning and inclement weather.** Leaders and Experimenters must exit the water and seek shelter when lightning is 6 miles away (30 seconds between thunder and flash), and must remain suspended for 30 minutes after the last thunder is heard. Leaders must postpone any water activity in inclement weather, especially any weather which obscures visibility or hearing.
- q. **Indigenous Species.** In all bodies of water, leaders and Experimenters should study the area before they swim to make themselves as aware as possible of the various types of aquatic life present and the various inherent dangers these species may pose. Some common species that swimmers encounter range from leeches to eels, jellyfish, sharks, and snakes. Others may include waterborne illnesses, parasites, and microbial life. Keep in mind that animals – like people – often seek the water in attempts to cool off.
- r. **Schistosomiasis.** Schistosomiasis is a parasitic infection that can be contracted in fresh water in certain tropical countries. Experimenters may not swim or wade in fresh water in countries listed as having Schistosomiasis in the country-specific World Learning Health Guidelines.
- s. **Say “No.”** As discussed throughout this document and during the leader training week, leaders should avoid unsafe situations where they may have to act beyond their ability and training.

#### The Experiment Water Policy

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