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BROWARD COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT LAUNCHES DROWNING PREVENTION CAMPAIGN FOR CHILDREN UNDER FIVE

Fort Lauderdale – Officials at the Broward County Health Department announce a new drowning prevention campaign, “**PROTECT, SUPERVISE, PREPARE**,” to motivate the families of young children to take preventive action.

Drowning is the #1 cause of all deaths for children ages one to four in Broward County. Children in this age group are at risk for drowning, especially in residential swimming pools, because they do not understand the potential danger and have the ability to venture away from caregivers.

“It’s time parents of young children hear one comprehensive, clear and concise drowning prevention message,” said Pamela Santucci, Health Education Program Manager, who provided an explanation for the impetus of the campaign. “We believe that prevention messages have been confusing. “We’re not even certain parents know that drowning is the leading cause of death for children ages one to four. Understanding and acknowledging the risk is the first step towards taking preventive action.”

“**PROTECT, SUPERVISE, PREPARE**” emphasizes that *three* layers of protection, not just one or two, are essential to prevent drowning in this age group. The benefit of using three layers of protection is that all three have to fail for a drowning to take place.

PROTECT children from falling into a swimming pool (or other body of water) if they wander away from adult supervision. Installing multiple barriers between a child and the water provides more time for an adult to intervene before the child can fall in. Barriers include four-sided isolation pool fencing, approved safety covers and nets, and locks/alarms on doors and windows accessible to water.

SUPERVISE children around water at all times. An adult should be close enough to reach out and touch the child, ignoring any distractions such as answering the phone. Communicating who has responsibility for direct adult supervision is essential.

PREPARE for an emergency - know Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) for children, have rescue equipment and a telephone nearby, and teach children water safety skills.

As part of Broward’s efforts to address the serious drowning problem, the Broward County Health Department (BCHD) convened a Drowning Prevention Task Force – Children Under Five. Members include representatives from Memorial Healthcare System, the American Red Cross, Coral Springs Medical Center, Broward Sheriff’s Office, Broward County Parks and Recreation Division/Swim Central, Broward County Medical Examiner and Trauma Services Division, Broward County Child Protection Team, Broward General Medical Center, and the Broward County Pediatric Society.

“PROTECT, SUPERVISE, PREPARE” debuts with highly visible bus ads throughout Broward County as well as extensive print and broadcast support, all designed to reach families of young children with this life-saving message.

For additional information on the new drowning prevention campaign, contact Pamela Santucci at 954-467-4790.

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