

ELENA MATAYAS CHILDREN'S CAMP SAFETY ORDINANCE

Background

While existing State law requires minimum standards for children's overnight camps, California is behind other states in that there are no specific health and safety regulations for children's day camps. This lack of oversight was tragically brought into focus in 2019, when six-year-old Roxie Forbes drowned in a swimming pool at an unregulated day camp in Los Angeles County.

LA County Action

On June 28 2022, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors approved changes to County Ordinance Titles 8 and 11 that will take effect starting January 1, 2023. This new Ordinance, known as "Elena Matyas Children's Camp Safety Ordinance," establishes health and safety standards for children's day camps located in the unincorporated areas of the County. The Department of Public Health is currently responsible for enforcing State regulations for overnight camps in its jurisdiction.



Overview of New Requirements

Children's camps will need either a registration or a permit to operate, depending on the length of time the camp is open each year. Both permitted and registered camps must comply with the health and safety requirements, which includes the following areas:

Staffing: minimum qualifications and counselor-to-camper ratios, Health and Aquatics Supervisor positions, CPR and first aid training, staff background checks and screening for criminal history

Procedures and Plans: written operating procedures and plans to address medical and other emergencies, transportation needs, and oversight of swimming and other specialized recreational activities

Operational: safe and sanitary conditions for the camp site, proper maintenance of equipment and facilities, availability of bathrooms, handwashing facilities, and drinking water



Application Process

Application and Fees: applications must be submitted to Environmental Health at least 60 days prior to the start of camp operations. Registration and permit fees range from \$174 - \$849 depending on the size of the camp and the type of activities offered.

Site Evaluations and Inspections: all children's camps will undergo a site evaluation to be completed by Public Health within 30 days prior to the start of operations; permitted camps will also have routine inspections to monitor compliance with the Ordinance. Children's camps with swimming and/or food service facilities on site are also required to obtain permits for those operations.

Public Notification: Environmental Health will list the names of all registered and permitted camps on its website; inspection reports will be available for permitted camps

Implementation and Enforcement: The new Ordinance goes into effect January 1, 2023, with enforcement starting March 1, 2023.

This document provides a summary of the requirements established in the Elena Matyas Children's Camp Safety Ordinance. The entire Ordinance, along with guidance materials and tools to support camp operators with implementation, can be found on the Environmental Health website, <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/eh/posts/2022/07/27/children-camps-ordinance-updates.htm>.

Questions can also be directed to Children's Camp Program: 626-430-5570.



¹In 2019, 6-year-old Roxie Forbes drowned at the swimming pool of a children's summer day camp in Los Angeles County. In her memory, her parents, Doug Forbes and Elena Matyas, established the Meow Meow Foundation to advocate for stronger camp oversight and drowning prevention and were instrumental in the development of this ordinance.