



Whitewater Rafting and Kayaking

Recreational activities are pillars of summer/winter camp, summer school, and recreational center experiences. They provide an opportunity for socialization and learning in a fun setting. These activities also provide an increased liability and potential for staff and/or participant injury. The safety of participants and staff should be standard operating procedure. It should be completed to the highest professional standards and in line with federal, state, local, and accrediting agency guidelines. The following checklist template provides a high level oversight to assist with your activity structure. Your organization is responsible for the development of your own written program guidelines and policies for the oversight of your activities. Through consistent management and preventative programs, exposures can be reduced to help ensure a safe recreational experience.

Any activity on “whitewater” is dangerous. Whitewater hazards develop quickly due to changes in water level/flow. Whitewater activities should only be conducted, guided and supervised by qualified professionals.

Pre-Planning and Participant Evaluation/Selection:

- Pre-planning is critical (what is the worse-case scenario). Identify potential hazards and untimely events (weather, injuries, participants falling in water, etc.). Identify those individuals that should not participate due to physical or emotional limitations. Include 1:1 supervision of participants with a pre-disposition for running. Educate supervisors/chaperones and outfitters.
- Research Whitewater Rafting/Kayaking vendor licensing, qualifications, experience and customer reviews.
- Physical abilities and experience of participants should be compatible with the Class Rating (I-VI) of the water (river, stream or lake). Swim assessment completed for all participants. Minimum age requirements.
- Formal written program outlining minimum age requirements and liability controls (liability waivers reviewed by legal counsel meeting state and federal guidelines) signed by parent or legal guardian and kept on file.
- Hazards include but are not limited to drowning, hypothermia, smashing into rocks and strainers (fallen trees, logs, etc.).
- Formal inspections and fitting of PPE (vests, helmets, recue lines). Use of Type V life vests required.
- Formal inspection of water craft and associated equipment (paddles, oars, etc.).
- Adequate number of qualified supervisory staff participating in the event.
- If the organization uses a third party outfitter, verify adequate risk transfer controls are in place.
- Formal contract between organization and whitewater outfitter.
- Verify certificates of insurance with adequate limits.
- Additional Insured status
- Hold Harmless language
- See the [Nationwide Risk Transfer resource](#) for additional information on how to protect your organization.

Whitewater Rafting/Kayaking Resources:

[International Rafting Association](#)

[American Canoe Association](#)

[American White-Water Association](#)

Providing solutions
to help our members
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and safety needs, contact
Nationwide Loss Control
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