

# Bobber The Water Safety Dog Program

**TOPIC/SUBJECT:** PFDs with Bobber the Water Safety Dog

**TARGET AUDIENCE/AGE LEVEL:** Grades 2<sup>nd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup>

**TIME:** 30 – 45 minutes

**THEME:** A PFD can save your life or the life of someone else if you use it and wear it properly.

**GOAL/PURPOSE:** To encourage students to wear the proper PFD.

**OBJECTIVE(S):** Students be able to identify the different types of PFDs, will know how to use them, and will be able to determine which PFD fits them the best.

**DESCRIPTION:** This program describes the different types of PFDs in an interactive way.

- A. The person wearing the Bobber costume will need help getting changed. Make sure you plan enough time before the program to assist this person.
- B. Arrive at least 30 minutes prior to presentation time to set-up and organize props.
- C. As a presenter set a good example and wear a life jacket during your presentation.
- D. Encourage controlled audience participation. Ask questions which the group can answer with a collective one-word answer or by raising their hands.
- E. Usually the settings for these programs are in large multi-purpose rooms, with one hundred or more students. It's important to keep control of the group at all times. Avoid allowing the students to surround Bobber. This situation can get out of control easily and the person in the costume can get hurt.

## *The Presentation - Introduction*

- F. Greet the students and introduce yourself. Briefly tell them about your position and about the US Army Corps of Engineers. Tell them that you are there to talk about Water Safety, but before you do that you want them to meet a very special friend. Have Bobber come out without his life jacket on and introduce him. Explain that Bobber is going to help you today. Interact with Bobber throughout the program. Remember Bobber doesn't talk and can only communicate through body language such as shaking his head or wagging his tail.
- G. Start into the program by asking who likes the water; how many know how to swim well; or how many have ever been in a boat? A show of hands can answer all these questions, and you can control this response by raising one hand yourself. This participation warms the group toward you, while holding their attention.
- H. Hold up a Type II and III PFD and ask "How many of you wore one of these while you were on or near the water?"

## *PFD Presentation*

- I. "These are very important, and we're going to learn a lot more about them today." Put that PFD down, and hold up the ring buoy. "Who has ever seen one of these?" SHOW OF HANDS. "Very good! What do we call this?" TAKE A FEW ANSWERS. "Very good! What do we call this?" TAKE A FEW ANSWERS. "Very good! What do we call this?" SIGNAL FOR A GROUP ANSWER BY CUPPING ONE HAND TO YOUR EAR. "A lifesaver or life ring! You may know it by that nickname because it is used for saving lives. I have a new word for you, though. This is really a PFD." HAVE THEM REPEAT PFD. "There are five types of PFDs. Bobber and I are going to show you examples of all of them today. This one is a type

IV, which means it's the type you throw to the person who needs it. It's not the kind you wear - We'll see those later. Right now, I'm going to show you how to use one of these."

- J. Give a demonstration of how to throw the ring buoy. Be sure the rope is properly draped across your palm, and that the rescuer's end is secured under your foot. Explain that you held the end of the rope underneath your foot so in case you have to throw it again or to pull the person that is drowning. "A PFD can save someone's life if you use it properly."
- K. "There are other Type IV PFD's which you have seen, and I have a different one here." Hold up the floatable cushion and ask, "Who has ever seen one of these?" SHOW OF HANDS. "Where do we see these?" TAKE A FEW RESPONSES. "Okay, now we need to know how to use one." CALL A VOLUNTEER UP TO HELP. Get the name of your helper.
- L. "\_\_\_\_\_ is going to show us how some people use this type of PFD." Instruct the volunteer to put his/her arms through the loops, and wear it like a backpack. "How is this? Is this right?" MIXED REPLY FROM THE GROUP.
- M. Demonstrate how this is not the proper way to wear this type of PFD. Have the student bend forward at the waist, with the PFD about his/her back. Explain that the PFD floats, but that this way, the victim is underwater, face-down. Then show the subject the proper way to use the PFD, tucking it in at the waist, having him/her bend over it, and grasp the edges while bending over it. Explain that now he is out of the water, and has a good, safe grip on the PFD. Then explain that the handles are not to hold on to, and that if they broke, the victim would be stranded. "A PFD can save someone's life if you use it properly." Instead, the handles are used for throwing the PFD. Take the PFD from the volunteer, and using the handle, gently toss it to the side, away from the audience. Thank the subject and have them sit down.
- N. Next, pull out the rescue bag. "At this point, you might think that this too, is a Type IV PFD, but it really isn't for a simple reason. It doesn't help a person float; although you can use it to save someone's life. You see...(SECURING YOUR ENDS OF THE ROPE, TOSS THE BAG TOWARD THE FLOATABLE CUSHION)...there's no cushion inside - just rope. So, you can toss the rope, and pull the person into safety. PFD's are made to help people float, and as you can see, this rescue bag is not made to do that." Explain that it is a good idea to attach a rope to the Type IV PFD so you can pull in the person that is drowning.
- O. Put down the bag, and pick up the ring buoy and cushion. "So, what are these? Type IV PFDs!" "Very good, now I have some other PFDs to show you."
- P. PICK UP THE TYPE III PFD. "This is what we call a Type III PFD. Who has ever seen one of these?" SHOW OF HANDS. "We usually see most people wearing these types of PFDs. Before you put on any PFD, there is something else you need to know. First of all, let's talk about what the letters PFD stand for. The "P" stands for PERSONAL; which means something made for the person. The "F" stands for floatation because it's made to float; and "D" stands for device.
- Q. So this is a device made to fit a person that will help him/her float. In other words. PFDs come in many sizes for different people. Let's see what happens when we use the wrong size. Call a very small student up to the front of the group and have them put on an adult size Type III PFD.
- R. "Now \_\_\_\_\_ is wearing this PFD and while at the lake he/she falls into the water. Slowly and gently pull the PFD over your subjects head, remove it completely. "What happens is the PFD floats but since \_\_\_\_\_ is too small for it, he/she slips right out of the PFD, so here is the PFD on the surface of the water, but what can happen to \_\_\_\_\_" RESPONSES.

- S. Open the PFD and point out that the size is labeled as an Adult. Explain the different sizes that are available. Then explain that the tag tells something else, in addition to size, which is important. Explain that a PFD must be labeled, Coast Guard Approved, and that this information can also be found on the label. Then ask the group to tell you what type of PFD it is before putting it down and moving on to the Type III.
- T. “So what PFD should \_\_\_\_\_ and Bobber be wearing?” RESPONSE. Place the proper PFD on the volunteer and Bobber. Put Bobber’s PFD on him with the straps loose. Ask the group if Bobber and the volunteer have on a PFD that fit them properly. Ask the group to look closely at Bobber’s PFD. Look at the straps. Ask for a volunteer to come up and help tighten the straps on Bobber’s PFD. “Repeat after me a PFD can save my life if I wear it the right way.” Thank the volunteers and send them back to the group.
- U. Pick up a Type I & II PFD ask the group how many have seen one of these types of PFDs. Then ask two volunteers to come up and put the PFDs on correctly. Explain that the PFDs are Type I & II and like the Type III they are made to be worn. Explain that though they are similar to a Type III in some ways, but they are also different. Once the volunteers are wearing the PFDs correctly, have them turn so that the group can see the head cushion. Explain that this helps keep the person’s head out of the water and the Type I PFD will turn a person face-up in the water, even if the person can’t do it for him/herself, and that this can save even an unconscious person from drowning. Lean the subject’s upper body backward just a little, demonstrating the position in which they would float.
- V. Next, ask the group if the PFDs are the right size for the volunteers. “Repeat after me a PFD can save my life if I wear it the right way.” Remove the PFDs and have the volunteers take their seats. Ask the group to tell you what type of PFD they are before laying them down.
- W. Pick up the Type V inflatable PFD. Explain to the group what type of PFD it is. Ask for an adult such as a teacher or principle to come up and assist you by putting on the Type V PFD. Explain that when adults wear this type of PFD they don’t wear it snug like the other PFDs. “Repeat after me a PFD can save my life if I wear it the right way.”
- X. Let the volunteer know that you want them to inflate the PFD without letting the group know. Ask the group if they know what will happen if (teacher/principle) pulls the string on the PFD. Have the volunteer pull the string to inflate the PFD. After the group settles down explain to them that is what helps the person float. Have the volunteer take the PFD off, thank them, and have them return to the group. Ask the group what type of PFD it is before laying it down.
- Y. Summarize by showing all of the PFDs again and ask the group what type they are. Remember a PFD only works if you use it and wear it properly. Repeat after me a PFD can save my life if I wear it properly.
- Z. If possible take a group picture with Bobber. Have some of the people in the group wear the different Types of PFDs.

**SUGGESTED MATERIAL & EQUIPMENT:** Bobber the Water Safety Dog costume, coloring books, temporary tattoos, etc (enough for all), rescue bag with rope, Type IV PFDs, Adult Size Type III PFD, Child size Type II & III PFDs, Type I PFD, Type IV inflatable PFD with extra cartridges.

**NOTE:** Arrange beforehand to have a changing room for Bobber which is easily accessible to the program area, yet out of view. Keep in mind that the person in the costume will need assistance. The assistant will have to guide Bobber past obstacles. Remember Bobber doesn’t talk and only communicates by using body language such as shaking his head or wagging his tail.