

Views from the E-List* – Therapy Pool Depth

Query:

My facility is planning to build an aquatic therapy pool with the dimensions of 16 x 18 ft. I need advice on pool depth since I would like to have both shallow and deepwater capabilities. The pool will serve both pediatric and adult populations. I am worried that an inclined or ramped pool floor will be difficult for gait training etc. Any suggestions?

Responses:

We have a pool 20 by 40 ft, with 3 separate depths, a step in between each depth. This give a long, flat straight distance for amb, and exer, and it works beautifully. The pool starts at 3 1/2 feet and goes to 4' 11", a lifeguard is needed at 5 ft.

I work at Aquabilities in Pa. They have a therapy pool that is 4 foot deep for the shallow area (designed for adult usage). Then they have ropes across pool held in place with a few poles embedded in the concrete. The pool then does a vertical drop to 8 ft. to become the deep end. This design eliminates the inclined pool floor and the roped off end signals the transition to the deeper water. The pole holding the line is about 4 foot from the side of the pool, and is tops off above the water line. This 4' "open side" becomes the entranceway to the deep water.

I am noting all of your notes, and find interesting the description of the various depths and how each of you has handled them. When we built our pool and now as we are about to build another, Department of Health had a lot of input on our depth- they had specific guidelines on how quickly our depth increased. In California the rate of increase in depth is calculated against the length of the pool. You can only increase the depth by a specific amount per foot. In Los Angeles County there have been difficulties with the Swimex pool that has a bottom that lifts. The health department would not sign off on the depth for the pool. I believe HealthSouth was the provider. The incline was 1/2 inch off and they would not clear the pool, it has been several years and they are still fighting. I know of another therapist who completed their pool but could not treat for almost a year while waiting for a variance which took a considerable amount of money to resolve.

My comment is to first determine from your Health Department and Building and Safety, what they allow. All this advice from the different pools is great, but unfortunately your city may not allow some or all of them. Further, in some instances these pools may be grandfathered and do not need to meet new requirements, unless they perform some type of maintenance which would allow for the variance. Start with your local city department, find a contractor who is familiar with rules and regulations for a therapy pool, and then look at these ideas and see if they are feasible. That is where you should begin.

We have a 8 ft by 12 ft pool with 3 depths, 3 feet, 4 feet and 5 feet. The depths are separated by steps with large black lines indicating where the step is-very handy with vision impaired patients. We also have a hand rail around 3/4 of the pool and a bench along each edge of the pool-very handy for seated activities. Our old pool had a ramp between the 3 ft and 5 ft area-totally BAD!

This was dead, unusable space. Hope this helps.

Our pool is 20 x 22 and we have three depths. Across one end we have an 8 ft. wide section of 3 ft. 6 inch depth, then it steps down across the width of the pool to 4 ft. 4 inch depth and in just one of the remaining corners about 8' wide and 10 ft. long is a 6 ft. deep end for our deep water exercises. We have a set of stairs you can pull out for cleaning and a lift chair for our non-ambulatory patients. We have an underwater treadmill in the corner next to the 6' depth area in 4 ft. 4 inch depth. We also have a bench built in across the 3 ft. 6 in. end of the pool that has hydrojets behind it. We can have toddlers walk on this bench when they are in with us. This setup works well with 1 to 4 therapists treating 1 to 2 patients at a time. We keep our pool at 92 degrees. I hope this is helpful.

**Opinions and suggestions expressed in this column represent e-list member responses to the query posted. They are not represented by the Aquatic Therapy and Rehab Institute and/or the author(s) of this column as recommendations regarding appropriate practice.*