NEVER OFF DUTY

STRATEGIC PLAN

2026 – 2027

NEW JERSEY

Monmouth and Ocean Counties



NeverOffDuty.org

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Background 3

Our Leadership 4

Our Vision and Mission 5

Our Values 6

The Need 7

Strategic Plan Overview 9

Priority 1: Board of Directors and Advisory Council 10

Priority 2: Partnerships in Disadvantaged Areas 11

Priority 3: Financial Plan 12

Priority 4: Branding, Communications, Social Media 13

Priority 5: Program Portfolio 14

Action Plan 15

Sources 16

Contacts 17

BACKGROUND



Never Off Duty (NOD) is a nonprofit organization that was incorporated in Hawaii in 2017. By the time of its 2024–2027 plan, NOD had trained and secured employment for over 400 lifeguards.

In 2023, NOD moved operations to New Jersey, where the organization continues lifeguard training and career exploration for lifeguards, along with elementary water safety education, junior lifeguarding, and American Red Cross CPR, First Aid, BLS, and Lifeguard training.

This Strategic Plan 2026–2027 keeps NOD's five strategic priorities and makes them specific to Monmouth and Ocean Counties, including NOD's role in the NJDOL FY27 Summer Youth Work Experience Program (SYWEP).



OUR LEADERSHIP

Jason Bitzer

Founder, President and Chief Marketing Officer

Jason Bitzer is a retired professional bodyboarder with decades of lifeguard and training experience in New Jersey and Hawaii. He serves on advisory boards for the American Red Cross and multiple international water safety programs. In 2019, he was awarded the American Red Cross' National Lifesaving Merit Award for his rescue of professional surfer Jamie O'Brien at Pipeline, Hawaii. He has been featured in the publication *Surfline* as well as the television program HBO's *Real Sports with Bryant Gumbel*. Jason is also a certified Emergency Medical Technician and experienced safety manager for large-scale athletic events.

OUR VISION AND MISSION

Vision

To become a nationally-recognized model for best practices in water safety education and emergency response job training.

Mission: New Jersey

To improve access and safety measures at New Jersey's pools and beaches in Monmouth and Ocean Counties by educating swimmers and delivering quality training and career coaching to lifeguards.



OUR VALUES

Core Values

Integrity We carry out our mission with honesty, responsibility, and respect.

Resilience We approach challenges with determination and a positive attitude.

Innovation We use creative methods to continually enhance our programs to meet the changing needs of our stakeholders.

Collaboration We welcome opportunities to share our knowledge and resources with community and industry partners.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

It is our conviction that safe swimming environments and effective water safety education are essential for all New Jersey residents, and we are committed to taking the necessary steps to support historically underserved populations in Monmouth and Ocean Counties. We strongly believe that an organization is strengthened by meaningful input and contributions from individuals of all backgrounds and identities who bring with them a diverse range of perspectives and lived experiences. We foster an organizational culture of acceptance and belonging.

CURRENT DROWNING DATA, NATIONAL AND NEW JERSEY

THE NEED

UNITED STATES

4,509

unintentional drowning deaths in the United States in 2022, an age-adjusted rate of 1.3 per 100,000 people.

Data year: 2022. Source: CDC, MMWR Vital Signs: Drowning Death Rates … United States, 2019–2023 (May 2024), National Vital Statistics System data.

#1

Drowning kills more children ages 1–4 than any other cause of death in the U.S.

CDC page updated 2026. Source: CDC, Drowning Facts (page updated Jan 27, 2026; WISQARS data).

54.7%

of U.S. adults reported never having taken a swimming lesson.

Survey year: 2023. Source: CDC, MMWR Vital Signs: Drowning Death Rates … United States, 2019–2023 (May 2024), National Vital Statistics System data.

NEW JERSEY

About 65

people lose their lives to drowning in New Jersey every year, including an average of 10 children.

Annual average as reported by NJ DCF, 2026 (years in average not stated). Source: New Jersey Department of Children and Families, press release, June 4, 2026.

81%

NJDOH data from regulated bathing facilities show the presence of a lifeguard reduces the risk of fatal drowning by 81%.

Data years: 2018–2024. Source: New Jersey Department of Health, “Summer Water Safety Saves Lives,” July 3, 2025.

30% by 2030

The New Jersey Swim Safety Alliance Water Safety Strategy aims to reduce drowning incidents 30% by 2030.

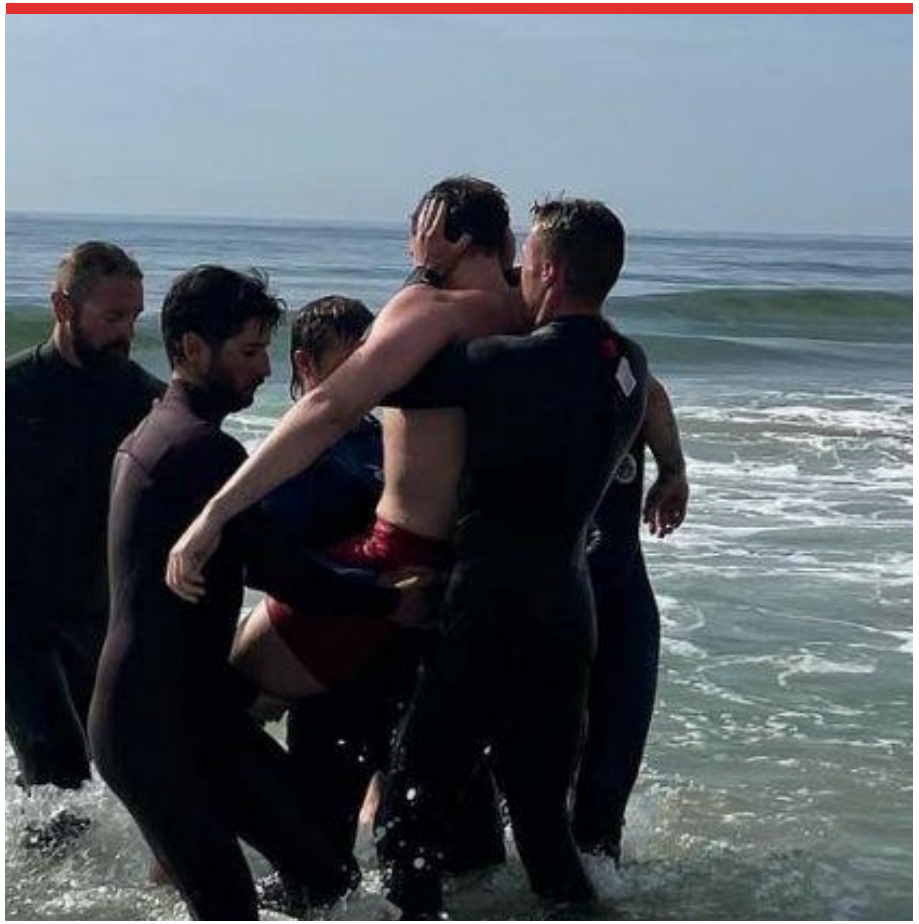
Goal reported by NJDOH, 2025. Source: New Jersey Department of Health, “Summer Water Safety Saves Lives,” July 3, 2025.

Monmouth- and Ocean-County drowning counts were not found in published NJDOH summaries for this plan; NOD will request them through NJSHAD rather than estimate them. Figures are reported as published; none are estimated. Full URLs are listed on the Sources page.

FROM NEED TO SOLUTIONS

Drowning is preventable. Layers of protection work: trained lifeguards, water safety education, swimming skills, and people ready to give CPR. NOD's programs in New Jersey build each of these layers.

- **Lifeguards save lives.** NJDOH's 81% finding is the case for NOD's core work: training youth lifeguards through SYWEP and staffing beach and pool clubs.
- **Jobs for young people.** Lifeguard training gives Monmouth and Ocean youth a paid summer job and a path to first-response careers.
- **Education in schools.** NJ school outreach and Barefoot Brigade support the statewide goal of 30% fewer drownings by 2030.



STRATEGIC PLAN OVERVIEW

Priority 1	Expand Board of Directors and Advisory Council	• Recruit more New Jersey board members • Update board governance and bylaws • Use committees and the Advisory Council
Priority 2	Establish Local Partnerships with a Focus on Disadvantaged Communities	• NJDOL FY27 SYWEP sponsor and referral agency • NJ school outreach and Barefoot Brigade • University aquatics audits
Priority 3	Reinforce the Organization's Financial Health	• Lifeguard services margin of 25%+ • Medline, PRESTAN, Heartstream sponsorships • Barefoot Brigade as a sponsorable item
Priority 4	Streamline Branding, Communications, and Social Media Presence	• Summer 2027 youth recruitment campaign • Update NJ web and social content • Apply the NOD style guide
Priority 5	Focus and Refine the Program Portfolio	• SYWEP youth lifeguard pathway • Document curricula • Engage an external evaluator

PRIORITY

1

Expand Board of Directors and Advisory Council

New Jersey – Monmouth and Ocean Counties

REGIONAL OBJECTIVES

- Recruit more New Jersey members for the Board of Directors, with a focus on Monmouth and Ocean Counties.
- Discuss and analyze insight gathered from founding board members in Hawaii.
- Establish an Advisory Council of subject matter experts in water safety, emergency response, and job training.

STRATEGIES

- Recruit from aquatics, education, workforce development, healthcare, and shore business communities.
- Create committees with defined objectives and action items that advance NOD's mission, vision, and plan.
- Update board governance and bylaws for multi-region operations.

PARTNERS AND MARKETS

- Monmouth and Ocean community leaders
- Workforce and education professionals
- Founding Hawaii board members



TARGET KPIs, 2026–2027

All figures below are goals, not results.

New Jersey board members added
Target: 2 by Q4 2027

NJ Advisory Council seated
Target: 5+ members by Q2 2027

Governance and bylaws review
Target: complete by Q1 2027

Committee meetings
Target: quarterly, with action items

PRIORITY

2

Establish Local Partnerships with a Focus on Disadvantaged Communities

New Jersey – Monmouth and Ocean Counties

REGIONAL OBJECTIVES

- Research Monmouth and Ocean communities that have historically been underserved and underrepresented.
- Connect young people to paid lifeguard jobs and first-response careers.
- Form partnerships and identify program contributors who represent the populations we serve.

STRATEGIES

- Serve as an NJDOL FY27 SYWEP worksite sponsor and referral agency, training 45 youth lifeguards for summer 2027.
- Partner with an eligible SYWEP lead applicant in Monmouth or Ocean County (local Workforce Development Board or municipality).
- Expand NJ school outreach with the free Barefoot Brigade program.
- Offer aquatics audits to New Jersey universities.

PARTNERS AND MARKETS

- NJDOL Office of Youth Programs (SYWEP)
- SYWEP lead applicant (to be confirmed)
- Monmouth and Ocean schools
- New Jersey universities
- Beach and pool clubs



TARGET KPIs, 2026–2027

All figures below are goals, not results.

SYWEP youth lifeguards trained
Target: 45 for summer 2027

SYWEP youth certified
Target: 90%+ of trainees

Schools reached (outreach and Barefoot Brigade)
Target: 10 by June 2027

University aquatics audits
Target: 2 completed in 2027

PRIORITY

3

Reinforce the Organization's Financial Health

New Jersey – Monmouth and Ocean Counties

REGIONAL OBJECTIVES

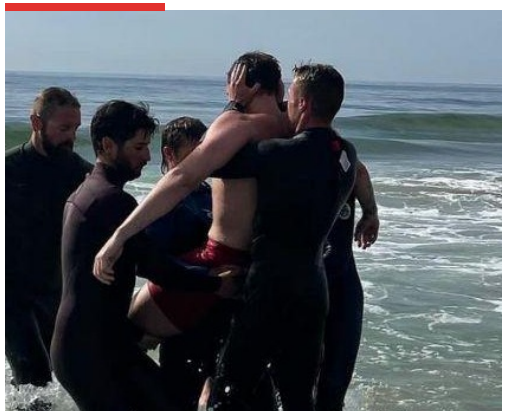
- Create in-depth New Jersey financial plans and staffing goals.
- Set short-term and long-term fundraising goals.
- Develop strategies for both restricted and unrestricted funds.

STRATEGIES

- Price every beach and pool club lifeguard services contract for a margin of 25% or more.
- Present New Jersey sponsorship proposals to Medline, PRESTAN, and Heartstream.
- Offer Barefoot Brigade as a sponsorable item for NJ schools.
- Meet all SYWEP reporting and compliance requirements on time.

PARTNERS AND MARKETS

- Medline, PRESTAN, Heartstream
- Beach and pool clubs
- NJDOL (SYWEP)



TARGET KPIs, 2026–2027

All figures below are goals, not results.

Lifeguard services margin
Target: 25% or more on every contract

Sponsor proposals
Target: 3 delivered by Q1 2027

Barefoot Brigade sponsorship
Target: 1 sponsor secured by Q2 2027

SYWEP reports
Target: 100% on time

NJ budget and staffing plan
Target: approved by Dec 31, 2026

PRIORITY

4

Streamline Branding, Communications, and Social Media Presence

New Jersey – Monmouth and Ocean Counties

REGIONAL OBJECTIVES

- Apply the organization-wide style guide to all New Jersey materials.
- Develop a robust communication plan across media platforms.
- Increase brand recognition and public awareness of NOD's mission at the Jersey Shore.

STRATEGIES

- Run a summer 2027 youth lifeguard recruitment campaign with SYWEP referral partners.
- Update the New Jersey pages on neveroffduty.org for courses, SYWEP, and lifeguard services.
- Share outreach stories and water safety tips on social media.
- Feature sponsors on Barefoot Brigade materials.

PARTNERS AND MARKETS

- Schools and youth organizations
- Beach and pool clubs
- Sponsors



TARGET KPIs, 2026–2027

All figures below are goals, not results.

Recruitment campaign
Target: live Feb–Apr 2027

SYWEP applicants
Target: enough to fill all 45 seats

NJ social posts
Target: 8 per month

Style guide compliance
Target: 100% of new NJ materials

PRIORITY

5

Focus and Refine the Program Portfolio

New Jersey – Monmouth and Ocean Counties

REGIONAL OBJECTIVES

- Identify and put emphasis on New Jersey signature programs.
- Create professional documentation of official program curricula, including training guides and accompanying materials.
- Gather feedback from program partners and contributors.

STRATEGIES

- Signature programs: SYWEP youth lifeguard pathway; beach and pool club lifeguard services; American Red Cross CPR, First Aid, BLS, and Lifeguard training; university aquatics audits; Junior Lifeguards; Barefoot Brigade.
- Hire an independent external evaluator for the signature programs.
- Revise programs according to partner feedback and evaluator reports.

PARTNERS AND MARKETS

- NJDOL (SYWEP)
- American Red Cross (training provider)
- Beach and pool clubs
- External evaluator (to be selected)



TARGET KPIs, 2026–2027

All figures below are goals, not results.

SYWEP curriculum documented
Target: by April 2027

Participant satisfaction
Target: 90%+ rate courses good or excellent

Youth placed in summer jobs
Target: 80%+ of certified SYWEP youth

External evaluator engaged
Target: by Q3 2027

ACTION PLAN

Q4 2026

Submit SYWEP Partner Interest Form and join NJDOL's Nov 23 information session

Confirm a SYWEP lead-applicant partner

Approve NJ budget and staffing plan

Begin board recruitment

Q1 2027

Deliver sponsor proposals

Launch youth recruitment campaign

Book school outreach

Complete governance review

Q2 2027

Train 45 SYWEP youth lifeguards (program year starts Apr 1, 2027)

Sign club service contracts

Seat NJ Advisory Council

Barefoot Brigade in schools

Q3–Q4 2027

Staff summer 2027 lifeguard services

Complete university aquatics audits

Engage external evaluator

Present results at industry conferences

Dates are targets and will be reviewed by the board each quarter.

DATA FOR “THE NEED”, ACCESSED NOV 15, 2026

SOURCES

CDC, MMWR Vital Signs: Drowning Death Rates … United States, 2019–2023 (May 2024), National Vital Statistics System data
https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/73/wr/mm7320e1.htm

CDC, Drowning Facts (page updated Jan 27, 2026; WISQARS data)
https://www.cdc.gov/drowning/data-research/facts/index.html

New Jersey Department of Children and Families, press release, June 4, 2026
https://www.nj.gov/dcf/public-information/media-publications/press/260604_watersafety.shtml

New Jersey Department of Health, “Summer Water Safety Saves Lives,” July 3, 2025
https://www.nj.gov/health/news/2025/approved/20250703c.shtml

New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development, FY27 SYWEP Notice of Grant Opportunity (revised Nov 5, 2026)
https://www.nj.gov/labor/assets/PDFs/Grants/FY27/11-5-26%20Revised%20FY27_02_SYWEP_NGO.pdf

All figures are reported as published by the source, with the data year shown. No figures were estimated. Where a regional figure could not be found, this plan says so. Photos: Never Off Duty.





CONTACTS

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