

Child Passenger Safety Week • February 11-17, 2001



Use child safety seats
for kids up to 80 pounds and make sure
they're buckled in **right!**



Caregivers Need to Know the Four Steps for Protecting Children in Motor Vehicles.

Help Spread the Word.

Today, more parents and caregivers than ever before secure their kids in child safety seats. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), from 1996 to 1998, child safety seat use increased from 85 percent to 97 percent for infants less than one year old, and from 60 percent to 91 percent for toddlers, ages one to four. That's a testament to your hard work and it's one reason child fatalities have dropped 16 percent since 1996. But amid this good news is an alarming fact: too many parents still don't use the full range of child safety seats, especially booster seats. And, even though safety experts strongly recommend that children should not be moved into regular seat belts until they are four feet, nine inches tall, about 80 pounds and approximately eight years old, booster seat use for children ages four to eight is less than 10 percent.

Why do parents and other caregivers stop using child safety seats too early? One explanation is that parents look to state child restraint laws for guidance. Many parents believe laws are an accurate measure of what is safe for children. However, many laws have gaps and thus do not provide the fullest safety benefit to children. For example, most child passenger safety laws only mandate that children be secured in safety seats to about age four and 40 pounds. In Washington and California, which recently passed groundbreaking "booster seat" legislation, those laws cover children to age six or 60 pounds.

Most caregivers don't realize the importance of changing child safety seats as their children grow and don't understand the danger that standard seat belts can pose to young children. Seat belts are designed for adults. On a small child, the adult lap belt rides up over the stomach and the shoulder belt cuts across the child's neck. In a crash, this can cause serious or even fatal injuries. Plus, in a rollover crash, a small child may be ejected when a seat belt is the only restraint system used.

Parents and caregivers also need to understand how important it is to have their child safety seats inspected by a certified child passenger safety technician. According to a National Safety Council survey, 96 percent of parents believe they properly install seats; however, from actual inspections, we know that at least four out of five children placed in child safety seats are improperly restrained.

As part of Buckle Up America, and in observance of Child Passenger Safety Week, February 11-17, 2001, we are asking all our partners to work with us to encourage parents and caregivers to have their child safety seats inspected and follow the four essential steps to protect children in motor vehicles:

1. *Use rear-facing child seats for children from birth to at least 20 pounds and at least one year of age.*
2. *Use forward-facing child seats for children over 20 pounds and at least one year old to about 40 pounds and about age four.*
3. *Use belt-positioning booster seats for children from about 40 pounds to about 80 pounds and 4' 9".*
4. *Use seat belts for older children large enough for the belt to fit correctly: at least 4' 9" tall and about 80 pounds.*

This needs to be a continuous effort!

There will always be kids and there will always be new parents and grandparents caring for growing children. Kids will continue to be at risk if new parents and grandparents don't get the message that children in their care must be properly restrained. Child Passenger Safety Week gives us a focal point to get the word out, but we need to integrate these messages in all our educational activities so new caregivers get this vital information to keep kids safe at every stage.



No matter what organization you represent or Child Passenger Safety Week activities you have planned, you can always play a key role in making sure your members, employees and the public follow the **4 Steps For Kids** and understand the importance of having their child safety seats inspected.

NHTSA Launches New Child Safety Seat Inspection Locator Service

There are a growing number of sites across the nation where parents can have their car seats inspected and correctly installed by a certified child passenger safety technician.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) introduces a new Web-based locator service so parents and caregivers can find a convenient place to have their child safety seats inspected.

Simply go to www.nhtsa.dot.gov and click on the "Child Safety Seat Inspections" link to find a current list of inspection locations in your area.

If you don't have Web access, call toll free 1-888-DASH-2-DOT (1-888-327-4236) to find an inspection location or certified technician near you.

You can use this planner to:

- Adapt and insert the drop-in article in your member publications and submit it to your local community newspapers. Submit articles and follow-up to make sure they appear in your newsletter or community newspapers during Child Passenger Safety Week.
- Copy and post the bulletin board poster at key areas in your offices or facilities. Copy and distribute them to local community centers, child care facilities, health clinics and doctors' offices. Copy and distribute them the week before Child Passenger Safety Week.
- Copy and distribute the "4 Steps For Kids" flyer and envelope stuffer at enforcement checkpoints, safety seat inspections, other public activities, or include it in mailings. Copy and distribute it the week before Child Passenger Safety Week.
- Use the tips and talking points when talking with parents and caregivers about proper use of child safety seats. You can also use them when talking with the media and writing a press release to promote your Child Passenger Safety Week activities.
- Share your activities with others! Please fill out the attached fax-back form and send it to us. Include any articles or news clips your efforts generate.

These and other supporting materials, including materials in Spanish, are available on the NHTSA Web site:

www.nhtsa.dot.gov by clicking on the **Buckle Up America** icon. **The materials can be reproduced without permission.**

Law Enforcement Has a Vital Role

Many law enforcement agencies plan to step-up enforcement of child restraint laws during Child Passenger Safety Week. During enforcement efforts, officers have a tremendous opportunity to educate drivers and passengers on the four steps of child passenger safety. Law enforcement is our most powerful and credible messenger. If your state's child restraint law contains gaps in coverage, officers can help educate parents and caregivers about why the law's coverage isn't sufficient to keep kids safe.

There are many opportunities for law enforcement to partner with community child passenger safety programs to help educate the public. For example, together you can help promote proper child safety seat use by becoming involved in local child safety seat inspection programs. To find an inspection location or a certified child passenger safety technician near you, visit www.nhtsa.dot.gov and click on the "Child Safety Seat Inspections" link. Or call 1-888-DASH-2-DOT (1-888-327-4236).

We encourage you to copy the flyer included here and distribute it to drivers during the week.



Follow the four steps to child safety in motor vehicles.

Skipping one could put kids at risk.

BURLINGTON, WI, – Barbara Halvey and her three-year-old daughter, Monica, found out just how important it is to use booster seats and to have child safety seats inspected.

On Good Friday 2000, Halvey was driving Monica for an Easter visit with Monica's father when they were involved in a serious crash. Ms. Halvey suffered minor injuries from the rear-end impact, but Monica was unharmed – perfectly restrained in her booster seat in the back. Paramedics who examined Monica did not find a scratch or bruise on her.

Many parents and children are not this fortunate. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), less than ten percent of parents use booster seats and most are not aware that there are four important steps to keep kids safe in motor vehicles. Skipping even one step can put kids at serious risk of injury or death in a crash.

Many parents use rear-facing and forward-facing convertible seats. But when children outgrow their convertible seats around age four and 40 pounds, most parents stop using child safety seats and move kids directly into seat belts.

This can seriously harm small children in a crash since seat belts are designed for adults. Lap/shoulder belts are made to ride over the bony areas of the shoulders and hips. With small children, the lap belt tends to ride up into their abdomens and the shoulder belt cuts across their necks. The solution is for parents to use booster seats until their children reach about 80 pounds and are at least four feet, nine inches tall when the seat belt fits them correctly.

Four Steps for Kids:

1. *Use rear-facing child seats for children from birth to at least 20 pounds and at least one year of age.*
2. *Use forward-facing child seats for children over 20 pounds and at least one year old to about 40 pounds and about age four.*
3. *Use belt-positioning booster seats for children from about 40 pounds to about 80 pounds and 4' 9".*
4. *Use seat belts for older children large enough for the belt to fit correctly: at least 4' 9" tall and about 80 pounds.*

Parents get mixed signals about what is safe for their kids. Many look to state child passenger safety laws as a measure of what is safe for their kids. However, most of these laws only cover children to about age four. "I see lots of parents with small children in seat belts or loose in the car," said Halvey. "If I went by our state law alone and didn't use a booster, it's possible that Monica would have been seriously injured."

The crash occurred one week after visiting a fitting station in Burlington, Wisconsin to have Monica's seat inspected. The certified child safety seat technician exchanged Monica's older model shield booster seat for a new high-backed belt-positioning booster seat.

"I had no idea that Monica was at risk," said Halvey. "If we had not had her seat inspected, Monica may not have been so lucky. I urge all parents to get their seats inspected."

Halvey is not alone. A recent survey found that 96 percent of caregivers were confident that they always install and use child seats correctly. However, actual safety seat inspections show that at least four out of five children are not buckled in right.

To help parents and caregivers locate a certified child safety seat inspection program near them, NHTSA has developed a child safety seat inspection locator Web site with a current listing of inspection services in your community. To find an inspection location or a certified child passenger safety technician near you, visit www.nhtsa.dot.gov and click on the "Child Safety Seat Inspections" link. Or call **1-888-DASH-2-DOT** (1-888-327-4236).

"Monica's experience demonstrates how important it is for parents and other caregivers to use child safety seats until kids fit properly in seat belts and to have their kids safety seats inspected as soon as possible," said Dr. Sue Bailey, NHTSA Administrator.

4 Steps For Kids

Protect your kids by taking each step as they grow and have their seats inspected.

The Four Steps of Child Passenger Safety:



Step 1

Rear-Facing Child Seats for children from birth to at least 20 pounds **and** at least one year of age.

Step 2

Forward-Facing Child Seats for children over 20 pounds and at least one year old to about 40 pounds and about age four.



Seat belts can seriously injure or kill small children who are not properly placed in child safety seats, so...



Step 3

Belt-Positioning Booster Seats for children from about 40 pounds to about 80 pounds and 4' 9".

Step 4

Seat Belts for older children large enough for the belt to fit correctly: at least 4' 9" tall and about 80 pounds.



Did you know that at least four out of five children in safety seats are improperly restrained? Have your child safety seats inspected by a certified child passenger safety technician.

To find an inspection location or a certified child passenger safety technician near you, visit www.nhtsa.dot.gov and click on the "Child Safety Seat Inspections" link. Or call 1-888-DASH-2-DOT (1-888-327-4236).



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Talking Points

- Traffic crashes are the number one cause of death and injury for children after the first year of life. Each year, 1,700 children die and almost 300,000 are injured in motor vehicle crashes. Six out of ten children killed in crashes are completely unrestrained.
- Most parents don't realize the importance of changing child safety seats as their children grow. There are four steps to keeping kids safe in a vehicle: rear-facing child safety seats; forward-facing safety seats; belt-positioning booster seats; and seat belts only when children reach the safe height and weight to fit in them correctly.
- Ninety-six percent of parents believe their children are properly buckled in their child safety seats. However, data from actual inspections show that at least four out of five children riding in child safety seats are improperly restrained. Parents should have their child safety seats inspected by a certified child passenger safety technician in their community.
- Child safety seat inspections will be available at over 1,000 locations across the country during Child Passenger Safety Week. To find an inspection location or a certified child passenger safety technician near you, visit www.nhtsa.dot.gov and click on the "Child Safety Seat Inspections" link. Or call **1-888-DASH-2-DOT** (1-888-327-4236).
- When properly installed, child safety seats reduce the risk of death by 71 percent for infants and 54 percent for toddlers. Rear-facing child safety seats, forward-facing safety seats and belt-positioning booster seats are all effective in saving children's lives during crashes. Seat belts increase the chance of surviving a crash by nearly 45 percent.
- Child passenger safety laws are essential. However, most state laws have gaps and none provide the fullest safety benefits to children. However, many parents believe state laws are an adequate measure of safety and as a result, move children too quickly from safety seats into seat belts.
- It is critical that children use booster seats. Less than ten percent of booster seat-sized children are estimated to use booster seats. Moving children too quickly into an adult seat belt system is dangerous. On a small child, the adult lap belt rides up over the abdomen and the shoulder belt cuts across the neck. In a crash, this could cause serious or even fatal injuries.
- Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for Hispanics through the age of 24 and the second leading cause of death for Hispanics between the ages of 25-44.
- Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for African Americans through the age of 14 and the second leading cause of death for African Americans between the ages of 15-24. The risk of a fatal crash for African American children ages five to 12 is almost three times greater than for white children.
- Child fatalities have dropped 16 percent since 1996 and seat belt use has reached an all time high of 71 percent nationwide. However, more still needs to be done to protect families on America's roads.
- Native Americans and Alaska Natives die and are permanently disabled in motor vehicle-related injuries at rates two to three times the national average. In some tribal communities, the rates are four to five times higher.

Tips:

• Follow the four steps of child passenger safety:

1. **When to use a rear-facing child safety seat:** from birth to at least 20 pounds **and** at least one year of age. The harness straps should be at or below shoulder level. For babies who are under one year and over 20 pounds, be sure they ride in a safety seat approved for heavier babies and continue to ride rear-facing until at least one year of age.
 2. **When to use a forward-facing seat:** if a child is at least 20 pounds and at least one year old to about 40 pounds and about age four. The harness straps should be at or above shoulder level. Most convertible, forward-facing seats require use of the top slot for forward-facing seats.
 3. **When to use a booster seat:** if the child is over 40 pounds up to 80 pounds and under four feet, nine inches tall. Belt-positioning booster seats must be used with both lap and shoulder belts. Never use a booster seat with a lap belt only. Make sure the lap belt fits low and tight to avoid abdominal injuries.
 4. **When to buckle up a child in an adult seat belt:** if a child is over 80 pounds and at least four feet, nine inches tall. If a child can sit with their back straight against the vehicle seat back cushion, with their knees bent over the vehicle's seat edge without slouching, they can be moved out of the booster seat into the regular back seat.
- **Have your child safety seats inspected by a certified child safety seat technician.** To find an inspection location or a certified child passenger safety technician near you, visit www.nhtsa.dot.gov and click on the "Child Safety Seat Inspections" link. Or call **1-888-DASH-2-DOT** (1-888-327-4236).
 - **Never place a child in the front seat of a vehicle equipped with an air bag.** All children age 12 and under should sit properly restrained in the back seat.
 - **Old/used child safety seats should not be used** unless you are certain they have never been in a crash. If you are reusing a seat, make sure it less than six years old, make sure you have all the pieces (including instructions) and make sure the seat has been checked for recalls.
 - **Always read carefully both the vehicle owner's manual and the instructions that come with the child safety seat.**

Let Us Know What You Did

Thank you for making sure parents, grandparents and other caregivers correctly take the "4 Steps for Kids". And thank you for making sure caregivers understand the importance of using child safety seats and having them inspected by certified technicians. We are making a difference and saving countless young lives by getting more children properly buckled up.

Let us know who you are and what you've done. Please list any innovative ways you have used to help reach parents and caregivers in your community about this serious problem. Simply copy, fill out and fax back this form.

Organization: _____

Contact Person: _____ Title: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____ E-mail: _____

How did you raise awareness of child passenger safety issues?

Please fax this form along with your completed survey sheets and press release to **Buckle Up America** at 202-366-6916 or mail copies to NHTSA, NTS-21, 400 7th Street, SW, Washington, DC 20590. THANK YOU!



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