



# Child Safety Seat Fact Sheet

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## Children, Crashes and Restraint Use

- Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for children ages 2 and older (NHTSA).
- In 2006, 670 children under age 8 and 452 children under age 5 were killed as occupants of passenger motor vehicles. Best practice suggests children be restrained in car seats until they reach the upper weight limit of the harness, usually around 40 pounds. Children should then use a booster seat until the lap/shoulder belt fits them properly.
- Of those fatalities among children under age 5 where restraint use was known (427), 35% were unrestrained.
- In 2006, 425 lives of children under the age of 5 were saved by child restraint use. Of those who were saved, 392 were in car seats and 32 were in adult seat belts. NHTSA estimates that an additional 98 lives could have been saved if all children under age 5 were properly restrained in child safety seats.

## AAA's Seated, Safe and Secure Initiative

- AAA launched the *Seated, Safe and Secure* campaign in 2002 to raise awareness of child passenger safety and strengthen occupant protection laws for everyone under age 18.
- AAA believes that closing the loopholes in existing state laws and educating the public about the proper use of safety seats and restraints for all children is the key to preventing child passenger injuries and deaths.
- Since the campaign's launch in 2002, AAA clubs across the country have worked to enact stronger child restraint laws in 40 states and the District of Columbia.
- AAA has actively promoted child passenger safety at all levels – from training safety seat technicians and hosting safety seat events in local communities to federal lobbying and service on the National CPS Board.

## Car Seat Usage Today

- Since 1975, approximately 8,700 lives have been saved by the proper use of child restraints (NHTSA).
- While 98 percent of America's infants and 89 percent of children ages 1 to 3 are now regularly restrained, many children ages 4 through 7 remain improperly restrained for their size and age. In 2006, NHTSA released study results showing that 72 percent of parents are not using car seats correctly.



### **Car Seat Effectiveness**

- According to NHTSA, child safety seats reduce the risk of death by 71 percent for infants and 54 percent for toddlers.
- According to the Partners for Child Passenger Safety, using a booster seat with a lap and shoulder belt instead of a seat belt alone reduces a child's risk of injury by 59 percent.

### **State Laws are Getting Better, But There is Still Work to Be Done**

- All 50 states and the District of Columbia have laws that require the use of child safety seats; however, many gaps and inconsistencies exist.
- 38 states and the District of Columbia have booster seat laws, leaving 12 states with laws that only cover children up to age 4 and/or 40 pounds, giving parents the false impression that after this age children can ride safely when restrained in an adult lap/shoulder belt.
- More than 20 states exempt taxis and for-hire vehicles from complying with the state's child restraint law and a third of the states permit drivers to carry more passengers than seat belts. These loopholes endanger children and must be closed.
- The federal transportation law, SAFETEA-LU, provides grant money to states that enact and enforce booster seat laws meeting certain criteria. Under the program, state booster seat laws must apply to children up to age 8, or 65 pounds or 4'9" tall. States receiving grants can use the funds for CPS education, enforcement and training activities, as well as to purchase and distribute restraints to low-income families.
- AAA was a strong advocate for including the CPS grants in the transportation bill. In FY 2007, the following 13 states and the District of Columbia qualified to receive CPS grant funding as a result of their booster seat law: Delaware, Kansas, Maine, Missouri, New Jersey, North Carolina, Oregon, Tennessee, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia and Wisconsin.
- The parameters of the booster seat laws across the country vary widely. However, the differences in these laws will likely decrease as states move to meet federal requirements for child passengers safety incentive grants. Currently, there are 20 different types of booster seat laws in place.

### **Car Seat Sales are Growing**

- 1990: \$200 million, 4.1 million units.
- 2007: \$371 million, 9.5 million units.
- Beginning in the 1970's, a greater focus to educate the public on safety seats and the dangers posed to children from conventional lap belts ensued. The first car seat safety law was passed in Tennessee in 1977 and took effect on January 1, 1978.
- As a result of early car seat laws being enacted, nearly half of the population 0-4 was riding in some form of child safety seat by 1984. Today, 98 percent of America's infants and 89 percent of children ages 1 to 3 are regularly restrained.



### **More Locations Offer Free Car Seat Checks**

- According to SafeKids World Wide, there are currently 31,429 certified technicians & instructors in the U.S.
- There are 3,811 permanent fitting stations located in the U.S., according to NHTSA.
- The SeatCheck service offered by DaimlerChrysler and supported by AAA, NHTSA, and Graco, connects individuals with local technicians who can ensure their seat is appropriate for their child and installed properly. It provides physicians an easy referral network in English and Spanish.

### **Hospitals Play Important Role in Car Seat Use**

- The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) started its child passenger safety efforts with the “First Ride a Safe Ride” program in 1980. This was the first organized effort of health professionals to advocate for child safety seat use. Many additional organizations followed suit.
- In 1999, AAP created “Safe Transportation of Newborns at Hospital Discharge,” which recommended all newborns be sent home in a child safety seat. Many hospitals have adopted this recommendation as policy to ensure the safety of newborns.