



NATIONAL CENTER ON
Early Childhood Health and Wellness



Become a Child Passenger Safety Champion! Car Seats Save Lives

All 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico have child passenger safety laws. According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#), “Car seats reduce the risk of death in car crashes by 71% for infants and 54% for toddlers ages 1 to 4. Booster seats reduce the risk for serious injury by 45% for children ages 4 to 8 years.”

Yet every year many young children die or are seriously injured in motor vehicle crashes. Early learning programs can make child passenger safety a cornerstone of their injury prevention efforts by educating staff and families about how to keep children safe in motor vehicles.

The best way to protect young children in a motor vehicle is to have a car seat or booster seat that is right for the child’s age, height, and weight. The seat needs to fit in the vehicle and be installed correctly.

What Programs Can Do

Develop Community Partners

Build relationships with police, fire, hospital, and other safety officials as well as local businesses and foundations that can help families obtain a car seat that is right for their child’s age, height, and weight when their child outgrows the one he or she is using.



Host a Child Passenger Safety Inspection Event

A car or booster seat that is not installed correctly will not protect a child adequately in a crash. [Find](#) or sponsor an event with nationally certified [Child Passenger Safety Technicians \(CPST\)](#). A CPST is trained to inspect car and booster seats, and can answer questions about how to install a child's car or booster seat or check to make sure it fits in the vehicle correctly.

Become a Certified Child Passenger Safety Technician

Health managers and early learning program staff can [become a certified CPST](#). This is a great way to help families choose and install the right seat for their child. Applicants must take and pass a certification course, and a small fee is required.

Raise Awareness about How to Prevent Heatstroke

Educate everyone in your program about the danger of heatstroke. Tragically, some families have forgotten their child in a motor vehicle. The [Look Before You Lock](#) campaign has developed important safety tips to prevent child heatstroke. Share these messages widely.

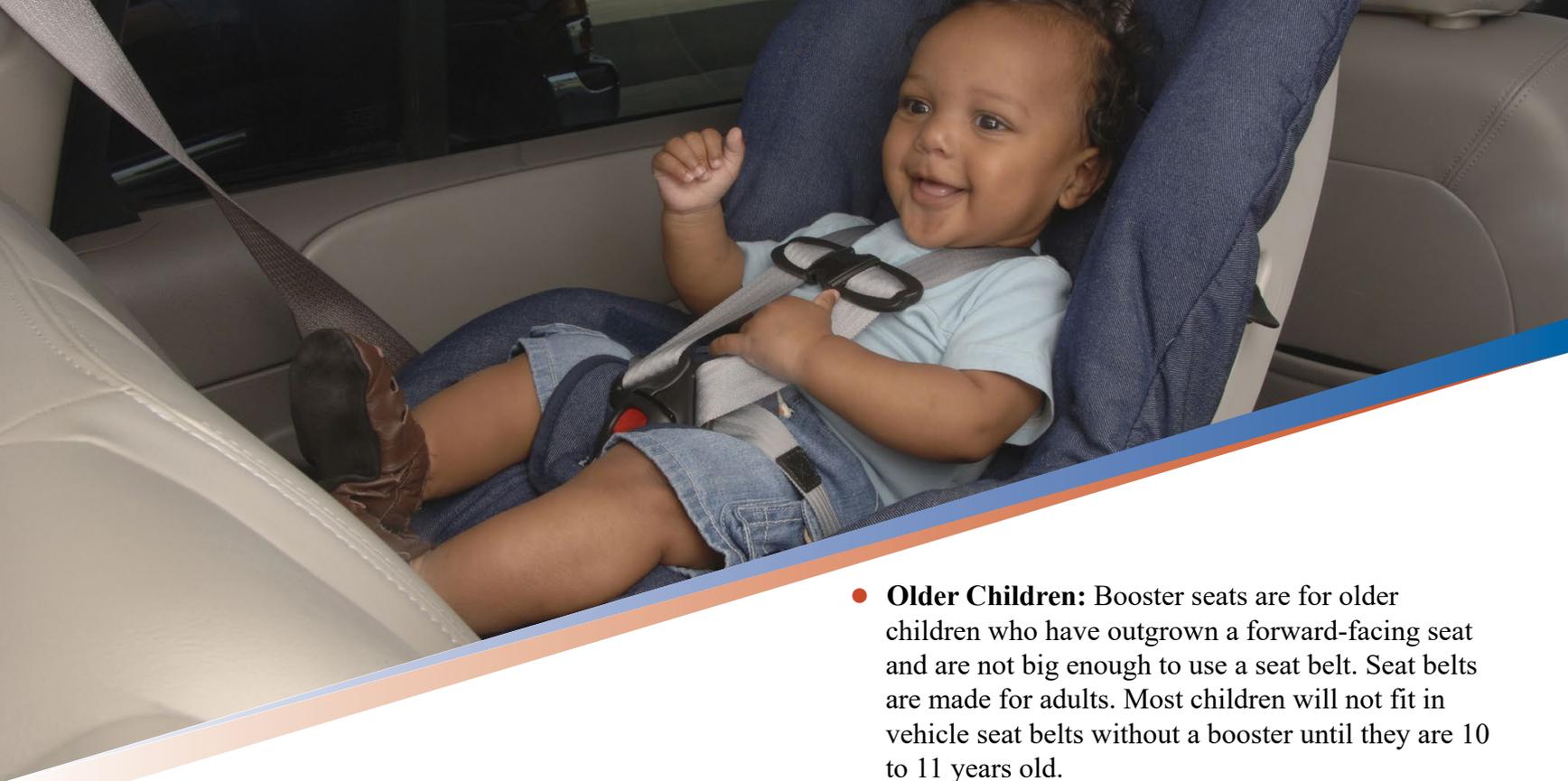
Teach Children about Motor Vehicle, School Bus, and Pedestrian Safety

Early learning programs that provide transportation services demonstrate safe riding practices, teach children to board and exit vehicles, and cross the street at vehicle stops safely. They also make sure that children know what to do if there is an emergency while they are riding the vehicle. Head Start programs secure children properly in Child Safety Restraint Systems (CSRS) when they are riding on a school bus.

Be a Good Role Model

Wear your seatbelt, avoid distractions, and [stay focused](#).





10 Child Passenger Safety Tips to Share with Families

1. [Choose the right seat](#). Children will need different types of seats as they grow, so it is essential to choose the right seat for a child's age and size.
 - **Infants and Toddlers:** Children under age 2 are 75% less likely to die or be severely injured in a crash if they are riding rear-facing ([Source: American Academy of Pediatrics, 2011](#)). The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) [recommends](#) that all infants and toddlers ride in a rear-facing seat until they are at least 2 years of age, or they reach the highest weight or height allowed by the car seat manufacturer. Some rear-facing seats are made only for infants. Young babies will usually outgrow them around 8 or 9 months of age. Then children can ride in a convertible or all-in-one seat. These seats also need to be rear facing.
 - **Young Children:** Forward-facing seats are best for young children through at least 4 years of age. Use a forward-facing seat until a child reaches the highest weight or height for their car seat. Families can choose convertible or all-in-one seats. They may also use combination seats that transition to a booster seat for older children.
2. [Register the child passenger safety seat](#). Registering the seat allows the manufacturer to contact the family if there is a safety notice or product recall.
3. [Install the child passenger safety seat correctly](#). Use the vehicle's seat belt or the [LATCH](#) (lower anchors and tethers for children) system to install the child passenger safety seat. You only need to use one, and both are safe.
4. [Always place a child's car or booster seat in the back seat of the vehicle](#). Until children are 13 years of age the back seat is the safest place for them to sit, especially the middle of the back seat. A [CPST](#) can identify the best place to install the seat(s).
5. Use a child passenger safety seat every time a child rides in a motor vehicle, even on short trips. Most crashes happen close to home.
6. [Buckle up!](#) Studies show that children are more likely to be buckled up when the driver is too. Wearing a seat belt in a motor vehicle is the best way for a [pregnant woman](#) to protect herself and her baby from injury in a crash.
7. [Stay focused](#) on the road. Texting and other distractions increase the risk of a crash.



8. Keep children safe in and around the car by avoiding the following hazards:

- **Vehicle back over:** Supervise children carefully whenever they are in or around a vehicle, and always check before backing up.
- **Vehicle rollaway:** Keep vehicles locked when they aren't being used, and never leave the keys where a young child can access them.
- **Trunk entrapment:** Teach children that it is not safe to play in a motor vehicle, and lock the doors and trunk when you aren't using the vehicle.
- **Teach children to be safe on foot** as well as in motor vehicles so they can learn how to judge what is safe to do and what behaviors are risky.
- **Recognize** the colors in a traffic light and what they mean.
- **Hold an adult's hand**, and look both ways before they cross the street.
- **Never run into the street after a ball.**

9. Prevent Heatstroke – Look Before You Lock

- Leaving a child in a car, even for a minute, is never safe - even with the windows rolled down or on a cloudy day. A young child's body can overheat—5 times faster than that of an adult—and can quickly rise to a dangerous level.
- Always check the back seats of your vehicle before you lock it and walk away.
- Keep a stuffed animal or other memento in your child's car seat when it's empty, and move it to the front seat as a visual reminder when your child is in the back seat.
- If someone else is driving your child, or your daily routine has been altered, always check to make sure your child has arrived safely.



Resources for Programs

The CDC has child passenger safety resources in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).

The Children's Safety Network has developed a [Child Passenger Safety: 2016 Resource Guide](#) with links to organizations, programs, publications, and resources that focus on child passenger safety.

Safe Kids Worldwide offers a variety of [child passenger safety resources](#) including fact sheets, tip sheets, videos, and [Basic Car Seat Safety checklists](#) (also available in [Spanish](#), [Korean](#), [Tagalog](#), and [Vietnamese](#) and [French](#), [German](#), [Arabic](#), [Hmong](#), [Haitian](#) and [Chinese](#)).

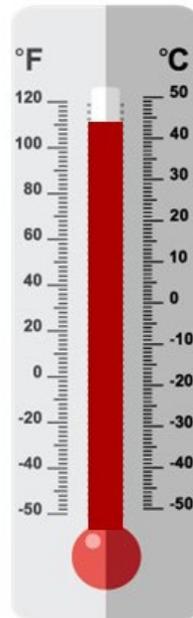
The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration provides guidance on the [Proper Use of Child Safety Restraint Systems \(CSRS\) in School Buses](#).

Resources for Families

[Parents Central](#) (The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration [NHTSA])

[A Parent's Guide to Playing It Safe With Kids and Cars](#) (NHTSA)

[Car Seats: Information for Families](#) (AAP)





NATIONAL CENTER ON

Early Childhood Health and Wellness

School readiness begins with health!

1-888-227-5125 • health@ecetta.info