



CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES AGENCY (CFSA)

2008 Quick Reference Guide CHILD PASSENGER SAFETY



Even with the existence of laws in all 50 states requiring the use of car safety seats or child restraint devices for young children, more children lose lives as passengers in car crashes than any other type of injury. All vehicle drivers and passengers must be secured with a safety belt or a safety seat! It is especially important that children under 8 years of age are properly seated in an installed infant, convertible (toddler), or booster child safety seat, according to the manufacturer's instructions.

FOUR IMPORTANT STEPS TO CHILD PASSENGER SAFETY:

- ***INFANTS:*** From birth to age 1 (or approximately 20 lbs), the child shall be placed in a rear-facing child seat correctly fitted into the back seat of the vehicle. The car seat should not move more than one inch side to side or front to back; the child's head shall reach under an inch or more of the car seat top.
- ***TODDLERS:*** From age 1 (or more than 20 lbs) to age 4 (or approximately 40 lbs), the child shall be placed in a forward-facing child seat correctly fitted into the back seat of the vehicle. The child's shoulders shall not rise above the car seat's top harness slots; if the harness no longer comfortably or safely fits the child, the child shall graduate to a belt-positioning booster seat.
- ***YOUNGER CHILDREN:*** Children 40 lbs to 80 lbs (4'9" and under in height) shall be placed in a belt-positioning booster in the back seat with the vehicle's lap and shoulder safety belts securely positioned. The lap belt should rest snugly across the child's thighs; the shoulder belt should rest snugly across the child's shoulder and chest. Never place the shoulder safety belt under the child's arm or behind the child's back.
- ***OLDER CHILDREN:*** All children over 80 lbs and taller than 4'9" must pass the four elements of the "Safety Belt Fit Test" prior to graduating to an adult safety belt: (a) check to see whether a child's legs bend naturally at the edge of the vehicle seat, (b) check the positioning of the lap belt to be sure it rests snugly on the upper legs or hips, (c) be sure the shoulder belt rests on the shoulder or collar bone, (d) the child maintains a correct seating position for the duration of time spent in the vehicle. If the child does not "pass" any of these four elements, return to the booster seat!

VOUCHERS FOR NEW CAR SEATS

Older model car seats are discouraged for use. The District of Columbia provides vouchers for newer models of infant and toddler-sized car seats. Call **[DC Safe Kids at Children's National Medical Center \(CNMC\), 202-476-4993](#)**. Required information includes a contact number for the parent or caregiver, the child's name, date of birth, and weight. Vouchers are only issued from the DC Safe Kids location at CNMC.

CAR SEAT FITTING STATIONS

All fittings are free and performed by a certified child safety technician in compliance with the standards set forth by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). A complete listing of District fitting stations can be downloaded from the NHTSA website: **<http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/cps/cpsfitting/FindFitting.cfm>**

CAR SEAT TYPES AND RATINGS

A thorough listing of car seat types with NHTSA ratings is located on the website of the American Academy of Pediatrics at **<http://www.aap.org/family/carseatguide.htm>**

For additional information on Child Passenger Safety, please contact: DC Safe Kids at Children's National Medical Center, 202-476-4993, or visit the Safe Kids Worldwide website at <http://www.usa.safekids.org>.