

# Child Passenger Safety Quick Facts and Best Practices

## New York State Restraint Laws

- All front seat occupants must wear a seatbelt.
- All back seat occupants under the age of 16 must wear a seatbelt.
- Children birth through age 4 must be in a child restraint system (car seat).
- **Effective March 27, 2005: Booster Seat Law**  
Children between the ages of 4-7 and 4'9" tall or less must use an appropriate child restraint system (car seat or booster seat).

## \*\*Quick Tips\*\*

### Rear Facing Child Safety Seat

- ❖ Never place a rear facing child safety seat in front of an active air bag.
- ❖ Harness straps should be **AT** or **BELOW** shoulders for a rear facing seat.
- ❖ Be sure that a rear facing seat is *reclined* to at least **30° to 45°**. If the seat is too upright, the child's head will fall forward and breathing will be obstructed.

### Forward Facing Child Safety Seat

- ❖ Harness straps should be **AT** or **ABOVE** shoulders for a forward facing seat.

### Booster Seats

- ❖ You must use a lap **AND** shoulder belt with a booster seat.

### General Recommendations

- ❖ Harness retainer clip should be at **armpit level**.
- ❖ Make sure the seat is facing the proper **direction** before installing.
- ❖ The safest place to install a car seat is in the middle, back seat. This position provides the safest crash protection from side impact crashes.
- ❖ Be sure you are using the correct **belt path**.
- ❖ Once installed, the car seat should not move more than **1"** from side to side.
- ❖ Install the car seat **either** using the safety belt or the LATCH System--*never both*.
- ❖ Car seats have a product life of about 6 years after which time they expire and are no longer safe.
- ❖ **Avoid using second hand used car seats.** It is hard to determine the crash history and safety of a used car seat.
- ❖ **Avoid using "after-market" products.** These are products that are purchased separately from the child safety seat. These products are not federally tested so it is hard to determine the safety of them in a vehicle crash.
- ❖ **ALWAYS COMPLETE YOUR REGISTRATION CARD** and mail it in when purchasing a new car seat. You will be notified of recalls or safety instructions by the manufacturer.
- ❖ **Keep child in the back seat until at least age 12.** Severe injury can occur if a child is placed in front of an active air bag to early.

## Best Practices

- ALL occupants in the vehicle should be restrained.
- Keep child rear facing for as long as the car seat will allow. Minimum standard of *1 year and 20 lbs.*
- Once child is forward facing, keep child in the seat until they exceed weight and height limit. (Usually around 40 lbs.)
- Keep child in a booster seat until seat's weight and height limit are exceeded. (usually 80-100 lbs. or over 4'9" tall)
- Transition child into seatbelt once they pass The 5 Step Test.

## The 5 Step Test

1. Does the child sit all the way back against the vehicle seat?
2. Do the child's knees bend comfortably at the edge of the vehicle seat?
3. Does the belt cross the shoulder between the neck and arm?
4. Is the lap belt as low as possible, touching the thighs?
5. Can the child stay seated like this for the entire trip?

**\*\* If you answered "no" to any of these questions, the child needs a booster seat to make both the shoulder and lap belt fit right for the best crash protection.**

**For more information, please contact:  
Traffic Safety Program  
Broome County Health Department  
(607) 778-2807**

