



**NORTH DAKOTA**  
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

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## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:  
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### **North Dakota Observes Child Passenger Safety Week** *State Health Department Reminds Parents of the Importance of Child Passenger Safety*

BISMARCK, N.D. – In observance of Child Passenger Safety Week September 19 through 25, the North Dakota Department of Health is reminding parents and caregivers about the importance of making sure children ride safely and correctly in vehicles.

“Chances are, not a single person in North Dakota would ever intentionally put a child at risk,” said Dawn Mayer, Child Passenger Safety Program director for the North Dakota Department of Health. “However, that’s exactly what happens when young passengers are not restrained properly.”

According to the U.S. Department of Transportation’s National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), the lives of 8,959 children in the United States were saved from 1975 to 2008 by the proper use of child restraints. In 2008, the lives of an estimated 244 children younger than 5 were saved by child restraint use in passenger vehicles. Research shows that child restraints provide the best protection for all children up to age 8.

The North Dakota Department of Health conducts child passenger observations every other year. In 2010, 87.2 percent of the children observed were riding restrained in their vehicles. In addition, almost 20 percent of the children observed were riding in the front seat; however, it is safest to transport children younger than 13 in the back seat.

2008 car seat checkup data indicates that five out of every six car seats are used incorrectly in North Dakota. The Department of Health strongly encourages caregivers transporting children to read the car seat instructions and the vehicle owner’s manual to learn how to install a car seat correctly. Caregivers who need assistance should contact a certified child passenger safety

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technician for help. To find a certified technician near you, call the North Dakota Department of Health at 701.328.4536 or visit the Department of Health website at [www.ndhealth.gov/injury](http://www.ndhealth.gov/injury) or the NHTSA website at [www.nhtsa.gov/](http://www.nhtsa.gov/).

For maximum child passenger safety, the Department of Health encourages parents and caregivers to follow “4 Steps for Kids,” a guideline for determining which restraint system is best suited to protect children based on age and size:

1. For the best possible protection, keep infants in the back seat in rear-facing child safety seats for as long as possible up to the height or weight limit of the particular seat. At a minimum, keep infants rear-facing until at least age 1 and at least 20 pounds.
2. When children outgrow their rear-facing seats (at least age 1 and at least 20 pounds), they should ride in forward-facing child safety seats in the back seat until they reach the upper weight or height limit of the particular seat (usually around age 4 and 40 pounds).
3. Once children outgrow their forward-facing seats (usually around age 4 and 40 pounds), they should ride in booster seats in the back seat until the vehicle seat belts fit properly (usually at age 8 or when they are 4 feet 9 inches tall).
4. When children outgrow their booster seats, (usually at age 8 or when they are 4 feet 9 inches tall), they can use the adult seat belt in the back seat if it fits properly (lap belt lays across the upper thighs and the shoulder belt fits across the chest).

For more information about Child Passenger Safety Week, contact Dawn Mayer, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.4536.

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