



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

NEWS 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 16 through 22, the North Dakota Department of Health is joining with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to remind parents and caregivers about the importance of making sure children ride safely 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 NHTSA, 7,000 lives have been saved by the proper use of child restraints during the past 20 years. In 2005 alone, the lives of 420 children younger than 5 were saved by the use of child restraints. Research on the effectiveness of child restraints shows that car seats and booster seats provide the best protection for all children up to age 8.

“Child safety seats and booster seats only work best when they are used correctly,” Mayer said. “It is so important for people to get their child’s seat checked. When it comes to the safety of a child, there is no room for mistakes.”

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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 as long as possible up to the height or weight limit of the particular seat. At a minimum, keep infants rear-facing until a minimum of age 1 and at least 20 pounds.
2. When children outgrow their rear-facing seats (at a minimum of 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. Seat belts fit properly when the lap belt lays across the upper thighs and the shoulder belt fits across the chest (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).

Throughout the year in North Dakota, at least 15 communities will have certified technicians available to provide free regularly scheduled child safety seat inspections to the public. In addition, inspections are scheduled one or more times in other communities throughout the state on an ongoing basis. Parents and caregivers are urged to get their child restraints checked to make certain children are secured properly in seats appropriate for their size and height.

For more information about Child Passenger Safety Week or to see if a car seat checkup is scheduled in a community, contact Dawn Mayer, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.4536.

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