

A Reference for Proper Child Restraint Use



Rear-Facing Infant or Convertible Seat

A child must be rear-facing until age 2.

The harness:

- must be at or below shoulder level;
- must have straps that fit snugly; and
- must be clipped at armpit level.

The seat:

- must be tightly installed with vehicle safety belt or lower anchors; and
- must recline so infant's head does not fall forward.

Note: Never place a rear-facing car seat in front of an active air bag.



Forward-Facing Seat

A child in a forward-facing seat must be at least 2 years-old and meet the manufacturer's minimum weight and height. Children should remain forward-facing with a harness for as long as possible.

The harness:

- must be at or above shoulder level;
- must have straps that fit snugly; and
- must be clipped at armpit level.

The seat:

- must be tightly installed with vehicle safety belt or lower anchors and with the top tether; and
- must be placed in upright position.



Belt Positioning Booster Seat

Children from about age 4 to at least age 8 must be placed in a booster seat unless 4 feet, 9 inches tall. The booster seat can only be used with the vehicle lap and shoulder belt.

The lap belt:

- must cross the lower hips and upper thighs; and
- must never cross over the abdomen.

The shoulder belt:

- must be adjusted so it crosses the center of the shoulder and chest; and
- must never be worn behind the back or under the arm.



Safety Belt

A child wearing a safety belt must be at least 8 years of age or 4 feet, 9 inches tall.

Passengers should sit upright with back against the vehicle seat cushion. Lap belt must be snug across the lower hips and upper thighs, never across the abdomen. Shoulder belt must be adjusted so it crosses the center of the shoulder and chest, never behind the back or under the arm.

Note: If possible, children should continue to use a booster seat if their knees do not bend over the front edge of the vehicle seat when the child is sitting properly with back touching seat cushion.



Pennsylvania Vehicle Code Safety Violations

Child Passenger Safety Laws

Birth-4 Primary Enforcement: Section 4581 (a) (1) Restraint Systems

All drivers are responsible to secure children from birth to age 4 in an approved child passenger restraint system. A child younger than 2 years of age shall be secured in a rear-facing child passenger restraint system, to be used until the child outgrows the maximum weight and height limits designated by the car seat manufacturer. Fine: Violators will be fined \$75, plus court costs, surcharge, EMS fund and administrative costs, or proof of car seat purchase.

Age 4-8 Primary Enforcement: Section 4581 (a) (1.1)

All drivers are responsible to secure children from 4 years of age up to 8 years of age in a seat belt system and an appropriately fitting child booster seat. Fine: Violators will be fined \$75, plus court costs, surcharge, EMS fund and administrative costs, or proof of car seat purchase.

The following guidelines are allowed under the law for children who:

- Weigh less than 40 pounds: May remain securely fastened in a child restraint system with a full harness appropriate for their age and weight.
- Weigh more than 80 lbs. or are 4 feet, 9 inches or taller: May be fastened in the safety belt system without using a child booster seat.
- Ride in a vehicle that was not originally equipped with a shoulder safety belt: Shall be fastened in the safety belt system without the use of a child booster seat or may be fastened in a child passenger restraint system with a full harness.

Age 8-18 Primary Enforcement: Section 4581 (a) (2) Restraint Systems

Drivers are responsible for themselves and to secure all children from 8 years of age up to 18 years of age in a seat belt system anywhere in the vehicle. Fine: Violators will be fined \$10, plus court costs, surcharge, EMS fund and administrative costs.

Best Practice Guidelines

- The back seat is the safest place for children under the age of 13.
- Children 8 years of age and older who are under 4 feet 9 inches tall should use a booster seat for their safety. Booster seats raise children up on the vehicle seat so that the lap/shoulder belts fit correctly.