

Family Living Connection

Julie Keown-Bomar, Family Living Educator

Wisconsin Child Passenger Law Changes

Parents and caregivers in Wisconsin pay attention! A new **booster seat law** has been passed and law enforcement officers are issuing citations for violations. The cost of a ticket can be as high as \$135. To comply with the new law, children must be properly restrained in a child safety seat until they reach age 4 (*previous requirement*) and in a booster seat until age 8 (*new requirement*). So if you have young children or if you drive with children in your car you will need to determine what kind of child passenger system will offer effective child safety protection in your vehicle.



Complying with the Law

Following a four-step progression can help determine what children need.

- 1) **Rear-facing** child safety seat in the **back seat** is required when the child is:
 - Is less than 1 –year-old or
 - Weighs less than 20 pounds.

- 2) **Forward-facing** child safety seat in the **back seat** is required when the child is:
 - Is at least 1-year-old but less than 4-years-old
 - Weighs at least 20 pounds but less than 40 pounds.

- 3) **Booster seat** is required when the child:
 - Is at least 4-years-old but less than 8-years-old
 - Weighs at least 40 pounds but less than 80 pounds
 - Is not 57-inches (4-feet, 9-inches) or taller.

- 4) **Safety Belt** is required when the child
 - Is 8-years-old or older or
 - Weighs 80 or more pounds or
 - Is 57-inches or taller

The only exemptions to this law are children whose body-size, physical condition or medical condition makes safety restraints unreasonable.

Taking a child out of their safety restraint to attend to personal needs such as nursing, diapering or feeding an infant or child while the vehicle is moving is a violation of the current law.

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Under this new law, drivers may be cited for allowing *any* passengers to be unbelted in their vehicle.

Maximum Safety

The majority of child car seats are not installed correctly and it is still common to see children completely unrestrained in a moving car. Car crashes remain the number one killer of children ages 3-14 in the United States. Here are some tips on how to make sure your system is providing maximum safety.

- Make sure the car seat is the correct one for your child's height and weight.
- Check with a local inspector who has gone through extensive training to help people install seats correctly and adjust harness straps. Inspection checks are held regularly in the Chippewa Valley through Safe Kids®.
- As children get older, they will have to make good choices about car safety

without you. Be a good role model and teach children to *always* buckle up. It's a good dose of prevention.

- Do not use car seats purchased at secondhand stores, flea markets or yard sales. Used car seats are never 100% trustworthy.
- Children and infants should never ride in an adult's lap while driving.
- The rear seat is the safest place for children of any age to ride

For more information about car safety, contact: Paula Pater with Safe Kids® of the Chippewa Valley. Her number is (715) 839-4481. The web site is www.safekids.org

References:

Safe Kids® handout, *New Child Passenger—Booster Seat Law*.

Safe Kids® Brochure, *Child Passenger Safety: Kids Can Live With It!*

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