

**Car Seats Colorado Overview & Partner Communications Toolkit**

**About Car Seats Colorado**Car Seats Colorado is a partnership between the Colorado State Patrol and the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT). Its mission is to create an environment in Colorado where every child is properly secured in a car seat, booster seat or seat belt while riding in a motor vehicle.

Car Seats Colorado is working to reduce the number of child passenger injuries and fatalities and child passenger safety citations statewide through:

* Education on proper child restraint systems, car seat installation and use and Colorado child passenger safety laws.
* Car seat safety technician training, inspection station maintenance and free car seat check events.
* Community outreach and engagement with health professionals, local government, educators, parents and caregivers.

**Facts and recommendations**

* Car crashes are a leading cause of death among children under the age of 13 nationwide, and three out of four children are not properly restrained when riding in vehicles, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).
* Parents and caregivers should have rear-facing, forward-facing and booster seats checked regularly for proper use and installation by a certified child passenger safety technician.
* Your child’s age, height and weight and manufacturer recommendations all play a role in proper car seat fit.
* During CDOT’s three *Click It or Ticket* seat belt safety enforcement periods in 2019, 349 citations were issued to drivers for having an improperly restrained child.
* Drivers found with an unrestrained or improperly restrained child under the age of 16 can be ticketed and fined.
* When it comes to buying a car seat, more expensive does not mean safer. All car seats — whether they’re $40 or $400 — must meet the exact same national safety standards.
* Car Seats Colorado provides education and resources to help parents ensure their children are riding safely. Visit [CarSeatsColorado.com](https://www.codot.gov/safety/carseats) to learn more.
* Common car seat problems:
	+ **Children are transitioned out of a booster seat too soon**. There is no age limit for a booster seat. It’s a combination of child size and seat belt fit in the vehicle that helps determine whether a child needs one or not. Keeping a child in a booster seat for as long as possible will help keep them safe in case of a crash.
	+ **Children are moved from rear-facing to forward-facing seats too soon**. Rear-facing seats give the best support to a child’s head, neck and spine during an impact. Even if your child’s legs touch the back of the seat, it’s safest to keep the child rear-facing for as long as possible, until they’ve outgrown the height and weight limits set by the car seat manufacturer.
	+ **Car seats are installed incorrectly**. Since every car and car seat is different, correct installation depends on vehicle type and the manufacturer’s recommendation. Proper fit and installation will help keep a child safest in case of a crash. Parents and caregivers should always read their car seat and vehicle owner’s manuals.

[Social media post copy and videos](https://www.dropbox.com/s/ivqh11c3udyy45r/Social%20Media%20Posts_Car%20Seat%20Expert%20Videos_201215.docx?dl=0)

**Website/Newsletter/Blog Sample Content**

**Is your child in the right car seat? Tips for knowing when it’s time for the next seat**

A car seat is one of the most important items you will ever buy for your child, but it can also be the most overwhelming. Many parents and caregivers spend a lot of time and money selecting the perfect car seat, but none of that matters if you’re not using it correctly. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), 75 percent of children are not properly restrained in their car seat – and most parents don’t even know their child is among them.

***Ensuring the correct fit***
So how do you know what type of car seat is right for your child? Car seats, booster seats and seat belts are designed to protect children based on many factors – including their size, age and developmental maturity. Car seat manufacturer limits for height and weight and vehicle type play a big role as well. It’s important to take all of these things into account to make an informed decision on behalf of your child. As a starting point, you can view the NHTSA’s recommendations on the [Car Seats Colorado website](https://www.codot.gov/safety/carseats/car-seat-fit-recommendations). Generally speaking, you want to wait until your child has reached the car seat manufacturer limits for height and weight before transitioning them to the next seat, booster or seat belt.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children remain in a rear-facing car seat until a minimum age of 2 or until they exceed the height and weight limits of their car seat for the rear-facing position. That’s because the safest position for a child to be in the event of a crash is rear facing, so it’s important to keep them there as long as possible. After that, kids should be in a forward-facing convertible car seat.

Once they’ve outgrown the height and weight limits on a forward-facing seat, they can transition to a booster seat. Kids should be in a booster seat until a seat belt fits them properly – meaning the shoulder belt fits snugly across the shoulder, the lap belt lays flay across the upper thighs, and their knees are bent comfortably at the edge of the seat with their back against the seat. This is usually when they’re about 57 inches tall. For many kids, that’s around age 8, but this can vary based on their development and maturity level.

***Help is available***
Car seat checks are available at [car seat inspection stations](https://www.codot.gov/safety/carseats/inspection-stations) statewide. A certified Child Passenger Safety technician will examine the car seat installation, check to see if there have been any recalls on the seat, check the expiration date and make sure your child is in the right seat for their size, weight, age and maturity level. Technicians also educate parents on things like how tight the harness straps should be, where on the body the safety straps should be positioned and more. To find a car seat inspection station near you, visit the [Car Seats Colorado website](https://www.codot.gov/safety/carseats) or find them on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/carseatscolorado) to see upcoming pop-up seat check events.

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**Common Car Seat Safety Mistakes**

More than 66,000 babies were born in Colorado in 2019, meaning plenty of new parents across the state have questions about how to best care for their newborn. [Car Seats Colorado](https://www.codot.gov/safety/carseats), a joint effort between the Colorado Department of Transportation and the Colorado State Patrol, would like to help new parents avoid some common mistakes when buying, installing or securing their child in a car seat. **These common pitfalls include:**

1. Using car seat anchor attachments and a seat belt at the same time
While this may seem like added protection, the two systems can interfere with each other and actually make the car seat less secure.
2. Accepting a used car seat without knowing its entire history
Even if it’s not visible, car seats that have been in a crash can have structural damage. And most car seats expire after six years – partly because summer heat, winter cold and year-round sunshine break down and weaken seat materials. Never use a second-hand car seat unless you know its ENTIRE history and it hasn’t yet reached its expiration date.
3. Straining the budget by thinking the most expensive car seat is the best
All new car seats have to pass the same stringent crash safety standards set by the federal government. Infant car seats that cost $50 are just as safe as those that will run you $500.
4. Failing to check for recalls
Last year alone, recalls affected 755,000 individual car seats. Check if yours is on the list every few months to make sure a new recall hasn’t been issued. Register for recall alerts at [CarSeatsColorado.com](https://www.codot.gov/safety/carseats/for-parents-and-caregivers/for-parents-caregivers) to ensure you get timely recall information from the manufacturer.
5. Strapping in a baby wearing bulky winter clothes
Car seat straps must be snug to protect a child in the event of a crash. Bulky winter coats or snowsuits create room between the straps and the child, increasing the force of an impact.
6. Attaching toys or after-market add-ons to the car seat
Toys, cup holders, rear-seat mirrors or anything else not originally included with the car seat can act as a projectile during a crash. Keep the seat and surrounding area free from clutter.
7. Moving your child to the next car seat before they’re ready
A child’s age, height, weight and physical development, as well as the car seat manufacturer’s recommendations, should all be considered before you move your child to the next type of car seat – NOT just their age. If you’re unsure of when to move to the next seat, visit a car seat inspection station to have your seat checked by a certified child passenger safety technician.
8. Putting baby in front of an air bag
Unless you’re driving a two-seat pickup truck, your infant should never be in the front seat. However, if you must, make sure the air bag is turned off — the force of the bag deployment can cause serious injury.

Watch installation and safety videos, download the latest educational materials, find links to recall lists and learn more about car seat recycling programs at [CarSeatsColorado.com](https://www.codot.gov/safety/carseats).