

Car Seat Law & Recommendations

New York State's Occupant Restraint Law

Child Passenger Restraints Are Not An Option, They Are The Law!

Every child under age 16 in the vehicle must use a safety restraint. If under age four, he or she must be properly secured in a federally-approved child safety seat that is attached to a vehicle by a safety belt or universal child restraint anchorage (LATCH) system. Effective November 1, 2019, all children under the age of two must use a rear-facing seat. A child under age four who weighs more than 40 pounds may be restrained in a booster seat with a lap and shoulder belt. A child of age 4, 5, 6 or 7, must use a booster seat with lap and shoulder belt or a child safety seat (The child and safety restraint system must meet the height and weight recommendations of the restraint manufacturer.)

Exception: A child more than 4'9" tall or more than 100 pounds is allowed to use a seat belt that has both a lap belt and a shoulder harness. To use the seat belt the child must be able to sit straight up against the vehicle's seat back with



his or her knees bent comfortably over the edge of the seat. The lap belt should be placed low and tight across the upper thighs; the shoulder belt should rest tightly but comfortably across the child's chest and shoulder (collar bone) without touching the throat. If the seat belt does not fit properly, the child should use a booster seat with a lap and shoulder belt.

Recommendations For Child Safety Seats:

- Every car seat has an expiration date. Typically it is six years from manufacture. Many have the expiration date stamped on the seat. Contact the manufacturer of your specific seat to find out what its expiration date is.
- Never buy a used car seat if you do not know its full history. Never use a car seat that has been in a crash. Avoid seats sold at flea market, yard sales or online.
- Add-on toys can injure your child in a crash.

- Do not use any products that did not come from the manufacturer in or with the car seat. Car seat fabrics meet strict fire safety codes.
- Have your seat checked by a currently certified child passenger safety technician to make sure it is properly installed.
- Never leave a child alone in a vehicle - not even for a minute.

Rear Facing Seats

- **Effective November 1, 2019, NYS Law states that all children under the age of 2 must use a rear-facing car seat.** For the best possible protection, infants and toddlers should ride in a rear-facing seat until they reach the weight or height limit of the seat. Most children will outgrow the infant seat before reaching their 2nd birthday so it is recommended that either a convertible or All-In-One car seat with higher height and weight limits be used. Research has shown that the "12 months and 20 lbs." rule that many parents cite when turning their child forward facing in the car no longer applicable. Rear-facing car seats provide the best protection to children in a car crash.

- Position your baby's car seat semi-reclined to no more than 45 degrees, so the baby's head stays in contact with the seat and the baby's airway stays open. Read the car seat instructions to determine the correct angle. If necessary, a rolled towel or foam noodle may be used to position the seat to the correct angle.
- Never place a rear-facing infant seat in the front seat with a passenger-side air bag. Serious injuries or death may result if the air bag inflates.
- Make sure the buckled harness straps that keep your baby properly positioned and secured in the car seat fit snugly. Loose harness straps do not provide maximum protection. Be sure the harness is tight enough that you cannot pinch webbing at the shoulder.

Rear Facing Seats Continued

- Position the shoulder straps through the slots at or below your baby's shoulders. Adjust the chest clip to armpit level.
- Use either the car's seat belt or LATCH system to lock the car seat into the car. Do not use both systems at the same time.
- The car seat should not move more than 1". Grab the car seat at the safety belt or LATCH path to test it.
- Find the frontal airbags in your vehicle by checking the owner's manual. Never put a rear-facing car seat in front of an active frontal airbag. Children are always safest in the backseat.

Forward Facing Seats

- Children over two years old can be seated in a forward facing convertible seat or high back booster seat with a harness (Combination Seat). The 5-point harness seat must be secured to the vehicle and provide the best protection. Check the weight limit of your seat.
- Position shoulder straps through the slots at or above the shoulders.
- Harness clips should be at the middle of the chest and level with the armpits. Harness straps should lay snug, straight and flat.

Recommendations For Booster Seats:

The safety belt in your vehicle is not designed for children. A booster seat raises your child up so that the safety belt fits your child correctly and provides better protection.

- The next step for children who have outgrown a forward-facing child safety seat is a booster seat, usually when a child weighs more than 40 lbs. or grows more than 40" in height. With a combination seat, the harness can be removed and the seat can be used as a high back booster with the vehicle's seatbelt.
- Belt positioning booster seats or high back booster seats are recommended for the first transition out of the five-point harness to the vehicle's seat belt. These seats ensure the proper position of the seat belt. Backless or low back booster seats can be used as the child grows, typically when the child is six or seven years old.
- Booster seats must be used with both the lap and shoulder belt. A booster seat should never be used with a lap belt only. Make sure the lap belt portion fits tight across the child's upper thighs to avoid abdominal injuries.

Before moving your child from a booster seat to the vehicle seat belts, please make sure that your child meets all of the following requirements for a proper seat belt fit:

- Vehicle seat belts are designed to fit an average-sized adult. To get the best protection from a seat belt, children usually need a booster until they are about 4'9" tall and weigh 80 - 100 pounds. Many children will be between 8 and 12 years of age before they meet these height and weight requirements.
- Your child should be able to sit with their back straight against the vehicle seat with their knees bent comfortably at the seat's edge without slouching.
- The lap belt should be low across the upper thighs or hips, not across the abdomen. The shoulder belt should lie across the chest and shoulder, not touching the neck or face.
- Your child should be able to ride this way for the entire trip.



Children 12 years and younger are the safest when properly buckled up in the back seat. This simple task reduces the risk of being killed in a crash by 33%.

NYS certified Child Passenger Safety Technicians are available to inspect car seat installations to ensure a proper fit. A list of technicians is available at: trafficsafety.ny.gov/child-passenger-safety

For more information, please contact the Colonie Police Department Community Services Unit at (518) 782-2662.