

# 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. 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 Infant Seats

- ✓ For the best possible protection, keep your baby in a rear-facing infant seat or convertible seat in the back seat for as long as possible - up to the maximum height or weight allowed by the manufacturer. For many kids, that will be 30, 35 or even 40 lbs. in the convertible seats. Many kids will be over age 2 when they reach that weight. The "12 months and 20 lbs." rule that many parents cite when turning their child forward facing in the car is actually the minimum size and age requirement for that change. Rear-facing occupants are safest.
- ✓ 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.

- ✓ 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 Convertible Seats

- ✓ Children over one year old and 20 pounds until approximately 40 pounds can be seated in a forward facing convertible seat or high-back booster seat with a harness. 5-point harnesses provide the best protection. The 5-point harness seat must be secured to the vehicle.
- ✓ 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.
- ✓ Backless or low-back booster seats are used in vehicles with a high seat back in which the child's head can be supported by the vehicle seat back or head restraint. High-back booster seats are used in vehicles with a low seat back where there is no vehicle seat back or head restraint to support the child's head and neck.
- ✓ 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:**

- ✓ Your child should be 4'9" tall or weigh at least 100 lbs. which usually occurs around the age of eight.
- ✓ Your child should be able to sit with his or her back straight against the vehicle seat back 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 under age 13 are safest when properly restrained in the back seat.



Children 12 years and younger should be 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: [www.safeny.ny.gov/seat-per.htm](http://www.safeny.ny.gov/seat-per.htm)

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