

# A Reference for Proper Child Restraint Use



## Rear-facing Infant or Convertible Seat

A child must be rear-facing until he/she is at least 2 years of age or has reached the maximum height and weight of the rear-facing car seat. Never place a rear-facing car seat in front of an active front passenger side air bag.

## The Harness:

- Straps must be at or below the child's shoulders.
- Straps must fit snugly. The harness should lie straight without sagging.
- Chest clip should be at armpit level.

## The Car Seat:

- Must be secured with the seat belt or lower LATCH strap threaded through the correct belt path.
- Must be tightly installed, allowing no more than one inch of side-to-side movement when pulled at the belt path.
- Must be in a semi-reclined position, no more than 45 degrees, following the manufacturer's instructions.



## Forward-Facing Seat

Once a child has outgrown the rear facing child seat, he/she can move to a forward-facing child seat. Children should remain forward-facing for as long as possible, up to the maximum height and weight allowed by the seat manufacturer.

## The Harness:

- Straps must be at or above the child's shoulders.
- Straps must fit snugly. The harness straps should lie straight without sagging.
- Chest clip should be at armpit level.

## The Car Seat:

- Must be secured with the tether and seat belt or lower LATCH strap, threaded through the correct belt path.
- Must be tightly installed, allowing no more than one inch of side-to-side movement when pulled at the belt path.
- Must be in an upright position, unless the manufacture allows the seat to be reclined in the forward-facing position.



## Belt Positioning Booster Seat

Children should use the lap and shoulder belt, with the booster seat, until they fit the vehicle's seat belt correctly, at approximately 4 feet, 9 inches tall and between 8 to 12 years of age. Note: A child should use a high-back booster seat if the vehicle has low seat backs or no head restraints.

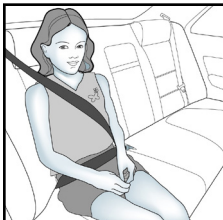
The booster seat must be used with the vehicle's lap and shoulder belt following the correct belt path.

## The lap belt:

- Must cross the lower hips and upper thighs, and should be snug.

## The shoulder belt:

- Must be adjusted so it crosses the center of the shoulder and chest.
- 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 and able to wear the safety belt correctly. The lap belt should be low and snug on the hips/upper thighs, and the shoulder belt snug across the center of the chest and shoulder.

- Passengers should sit upright with their back against the vehicle seat back cushion.
- The child's knees should bend comfortably at the front edge of the vehicle seat, with their feet flat on the floor.
- The lap belt must be low and snug across the hips and upper thighs – never across the abdomen.
- The shoulder belt must be snug across the center of the chest and shoulder – never behind the back or under the arm.
- The head restraint should be properly positioned behind the child's head.

# Pennsylvania Vehicle Code Safety Violations

## Child Passenger Safety Laws

**All drivers are responsible for securing children in the appropriate restraint system.**

### **Birth – Age 4: Primary Enforcement: Section 4581 (a) (1) Restraint Systems**

All drivers are responsible to secure children from birth up to age four in an approved child passenger restraint system anywhere in the vehicle. ***A child younger than two years of age shall be secured in a rear-facing child passenger restraint system, to be used until the child outgrows the maximum height and weight limits designated by the car seat manufacturer.*** Fine: Maximum fine of \$75 plus court costs, Surcharge, EMS, JCP or proof of car seat purchase.

### **Age 4 – Age 8: Primary Enforcement: Section 4581 (a)(1) .1**

All drivers are responsible to secure children from four up to eight years of age in a seat belt system and an appropriately fitting child booster seat. Fine: Failure to comply with the provisions in 4581 (a) (1.1) shall be guilty of a summary offense with a maximum fine of \$75 plus Surcharge, EMS, JCP or proof of car seat purchase.

**The following guidelines are allowed under the law for children between ages 4 to 8 who:**

- Weigh less than 40 lbs.: 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 4'9" or taller: May be fastened in the safety belt system without using a child booster seat.
- Ride in a vehicle which 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 – Age 18: Primary Enforcement: Section 4581 (a)(2) Restraint Systems**

Drivers are responsible for themselves and to secure all children from eight through 18 years of age in a seat belt system anywhere in the vehicle. Fine: \$10 plus Surcharge, EMS and JCP when convicted of a primary offense.

#### **Best Practice Guidelines:**

- All children younger than 13 should be restrained in the rear seat.
- Children 2 years or older should use a forward-facing child safety seat with harness for as long as possible, up to the height and weight limit of the seat.
- Regardless of age, children less than 4 feet, 9 inches tall should be secured using a booster seat. Booster seats raise children up on the vehicle's seat so that the lap/shoulder belts fit correctly.
- Children who are old enough and large enough to use the seat belt alone should always use lap and shoulder belts.



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