

## Child Passenger Safety/Click It or Ticket Campaign September 13 – 26, 2020



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Child passenger safety seats or car seats are one of the best investments in your child's safety when riding in a vehicle. Car seats, like seat belts are designed to hold your child in place should you be involved in a crash. For them to work properly, you must have the right car seat for your child.

Pennsylvania law requires that any child under the age of 18 must be properly restrained in a seat belt or in a child passenger safety seat depending on their age:

- birth to age 2 a child must be in a rear-facing seat.
- ages 2-4 in a forward-facing seat.
- ages 4-8 in a booster seat.
- 8 years and older in a seat belt.

But this is where the confusion comes in, as car seats are based on height and weight and not age. So, keep reading to find out how to get the proper car seat for your child to help keep them safe.

Before shopping for a car seat, you must know your child's age, height, and weight. This information is essential to finding the correct car seat for your child. So as a "best practice principle", you want to have your child in the correct car seat no matter what their age. When shopping for a car seat, select one that fits your child's height and weight range, one that is easy for you to use and one that will fit in your vehicle properly.

I see parents make the mistake of moving their child from a forward-facing seat to a booster seat or from a booster seat to a seat belt too soon. This is because they think their child is big enough, old enough or just get tired of hearing them whine and complain. But safety is your responsibility not only as the driver of the vehicle but as the parent. The "best practice principle" for this is to not move your child to the next size car seat until they outgrow the car seat, they are currently in. For your child to just be in a seat belt, it is recommended they meet the following criteria of the seat belt fit test:

- be at least 4 foot 9 inches tall
- sit in the back seat with their back and bottom against the seat back
- knees naturally bend at the front edge of the seat and feet are flat on the floor
- shoulder belt crosses center of collar bone and center of the chest
- lap belt lies low on the hips, at the top of the thighs
- tween/teen can stay seated like this for the entire ride

This is to ensure the seat belt will fit correctly. If not, they will put the shoulder strap behind them or under their arm and that defeats the purpose of the seat belt holding them in place. Not wearing a seat belt properly can result in serious injury or even death.

When it comes to installing a child passenger seat in your vehicle, be sure to read the entire owner's manual that comes with it, along with the vehicle's owner's manual as some vehicle manufacturers do not allow car seats to be installed in certain seating positions. As a reminder

do not install an infant/car seat in front of an airbag. If this is your only option, be sure to have the airbag turned off or disconnected. This can be done at the car dealership.

During this Click It or Ticket and Child Passenger Seat Enforcement Campaign, police will be issuing tickets for drivers and passengers not wearing seat belts and for car seat violations when children are not in a car seat, not properly restrained in a car seat or not in the correct car seat.

Children are the most precious cargo in a vehicle, protect them by having them in the correct car seat. If you are interested in a free Child Passenger Seat Education Class, please contact me. The class is approximately 1 hour long and can be presented in person or via Zoom.

For questions, comments or to request the CPS Ed Class, please email me at [ffox@hsnetwork.org](mailto:ffox@hsnetwork.org). You can also follow me on Facebook @safetyfox or on Instagram at: highwaysafetynetworkd5. This is a PennDOT funded project.