

THE KHS Voice

Kentucky Office of Highway Safety

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When can my child safely use a seat belt without a booster?

1. Can your child sit straight against the back of the vehicle seat?
2. Can your child's legs bend at the knee on the edge of the vehicle seat?
3. Can your child sit comfortably in the vehicle seat without slouching?
4. Does the lap portion of the seat belt lay across your child's hips, touching the thighs?
5. Does the shoulder belt stay at the center of your child's shoulder, crossing the collarbone?

If you answered YES to ALL FIVE questions, your child is ready to use a seat belt.



Vehicle crashes are the No. 1 killer of children 1 to 12 years old in the United States, according to the [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration](#) (NHTSA). The best protection is to properly use car seats, booster seats and seat belts. Using the correct restraints in passenger cars reduces infants' and toddlers' chances of fatal injury by 71 percent and 54 percent, respectively.

However, NHTSA states three out of four children are not as secure in the car as they should be due to incorrect use.

There are many car seat types and models, which can cause confusion for parents. So, how do you know which one is right for your child? The right car seat or booster fits your child and your car, and is one you will use correctly every time

you travel. Not only will your child ride as safely as possible, you will be establishing the foundation for a life-long habit of seat belt use every time your child travels.

NHTSA has created [Parents Central](#) website with tools and resources for keeping children safe when in and around vehicles. The Parents Central microsite, www.safercar.gov/therightseat, provides information on selecting the proper car seat and how to install and use car seats correctly.

For additional information and videos, visit the [Children's Hospital of Philadelphia website](#).



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Director's Message

— Bill Bell



Booster seat enhancement bill needed for greater child safety

HB 282 would bring Kentucky in line with 31 other states, all neighboring states

Car crashes are the No. 1 killer of children 1 to 12 years old in the United States. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), the best way to protect them in the car is to put them in the right seat, at the right time, and use it the right way.

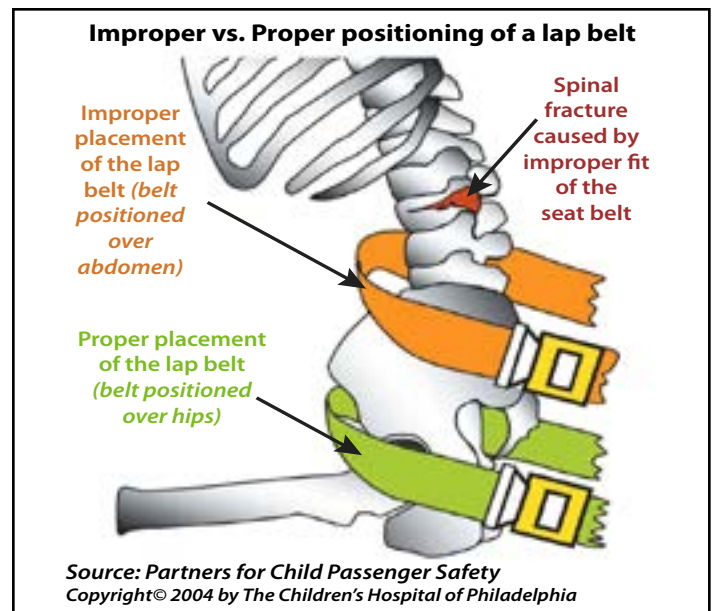
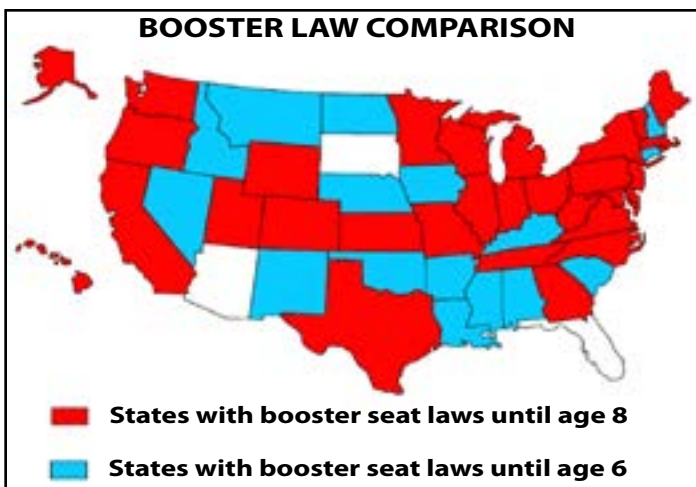
That is why it is critically important that the Kentucky General Assembly enact [House Bill 282](#), the Booster Seat enhancement bill that is a key piece of [Governor Steve Beshear's](#) legislative initiatives for greater safety and protection of our most precious asset – our children.

Enactment of HB 282 would bring Kentucky in line with 31 other states, including all seven of our neighboring states, which require that children, once having outgrown harnessed child passenger seats, continue to use belted booster seats until they are 9 years old or 4 feet, 9 inches tall (57 inches).

The reason is simple: Motor vehicle seat belts were designed for adults, not children. But the added height of the booster seat enables the child to fit into a seat belt properly.

Consider the case of an 8-year-old of typical height– 49 inches. Envision that child buckled into a standard seat belt without the benefit of a booster seat. By virtue of being 8 years old, the child is legally restrained in Kentucky. But is he or she safely restrained?

Chances are that the shoulder belt is on the child's neck rather than the collar bone. The lap belt is up on the abdomen rather than over the lap and pelvis. According to [Kosair Children's Hospital](#), the ill-fitting lap belt puts the child at significantly greater risk of serious injury to the liver, spleen, pancreas, kidneys and intestines in the event of a crash. The ill-fitting shoulder belt puts the child at much higher risk of a serious head or facial injury.



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The following information from Kosair, drawn from 142 trauma cases involving children in motor vehicle crashes, was presented recently to the House Transportation Committee in Frankfort:

- All were restrained in seat belts.
- 70 percent were older than 7 and younger than 10 - so a booster seat was not required.
- All had injuries to internal organs.
- Half the children had head or face injuries, of which 30 percent were severe.
- 1 in 5 had large-bone leg fractures.
- One child had a traumatic amputation consistent with having a belt that was not snug.

Thanks to research by NHTSA and the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#), we now know that our legal standard is not a sufficiently safe standard.

Our emphasis needs to be on what is safe, not merely what is legal.

HB 282 has been passed by the Kentucky House and now awaits action in the Kentucky Senate.

Over the years, Kentucky has taken important steps aimed at improving the safety of children in passenger vehicles. In 1982, the General Assembly passed legislation that for the first time required the use of child passenger seats, and in 1988 attached penalties for noncompliance. The General Assembly followed up in 2008 with enactment of our current law, which requires use of booster seats for children under age 7 and between 40 and 50 inches in height.

HB282 is not complicated legislation. If enacted, the booster seat already being used by a 6-year-old would continue in use through age 8.

We applaud the Kentucky House for having passed HB 282. We strongly encourage and eagerly await passage in the Kentucky Senate.



This child is 8 years old and 49" tall. She is currently legal by not riding on a booster seat; however, notice the shoulder belt is on her neck and the lap belt is on her abdomen.



This is the same young lady, in the same vehicle; but this time she is in a backless booster seat. Notice her seatbelt hits her collar bone and rides lower on her lap and over the hip bone.

Did you know?

Children left in vehicles risk carbon monoxide poisoning

Think running the car to keep your child warm is safe? [Carbon monoxide](#) can build up in a vehicle and asphyxiate anyone, so never leave your child alone in a running vehicle.

Mistakes moms make while driving

A recent [survey](#) by [Safe Kids Worldwide](#) and [American Baby Magazine](#) finds that new mothers indulge in risky driving behaviors, such as talking and texting on a cell phone, with their babies in the car.

Keep informed on recalls

[Sign up](#) with [Safe Kids USA](#) to receive twice-per-month children's product recalls.. Sign up with NHTSA to receive e-mails on car seat, vehicle and/or tire recalls.

YourLetters

Rick, Matt and James,

On behalf of the Fulton County Sheriff's Office and the Fulton County School Systems, we would like to thank you for coming down to western Kentucky to help make the students aware of the dangers from texting and impaired driving. I've only heard positive feedback from the students, staff and the parents. It gave the students an opportunity to experience the potential dangers that may occur if they choose to text or drink and drive.

As we discussed, hopefully we can make this an annual event. If we can ever assist you in the far end of west Kentucky please don't hesitate to contact us.

Thanks again,
Deputy David Thomas
Fulton County Sheriff's Office



EventCalendar

An up-to-date and detailed listing will be on our [Events Facebook page](#)

Did you know?

Kentucky's 2013 highway map now available

Click [here](#) for the online version. To request hard copies, click [here](#) and select "State Highway Map Request."

KYTC Minute features the John R. Elliott HERO campaign

Click [here](#) to view the latest efforts to promote the use of designated drivers in Kentucky.

KBT Conference recap

For a recap of the 2013 Kentuckians for Better Transportation Conference click [here](#).

Deadline for KYTC engineering scholarships is approaching

The deadline to [apply](#) for the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet's Engineering Scholarship Programs is March 1, 2013.



Civil Engineering
Scholarship Program

Kentucky Transportation Cabinet



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