

# Protecting Our Children

## Boosting Awareness Of Booster Seat Safety

(NAPSA)—An all-out effort has been launched to save lives by getting more children ages 4 to 8 into booster seats. It's estimated less than 10 percent of the children who should be in booster seats when traveling in a car actually use them.

Child passenger restraint use has hit record levels for infants and toddlers. But those gains haven't caught up to older children, typically those ages 4 to 8. Many of these children are too big for child safety seats but too small to properly wear safety belts, which are designed for adults.

The public awareness effort, led by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), will consist of a major print, radio and television ad campaign from the Ad Council showing how booster seats save children's lives. The campaign will also include a new Web site, [www.boosterseat.gov](http://www.boosterseat.gov), that provides information and helpful tools such as a guide to choosing the right restraint for children, as well as a teacher's guide and educational outreach on booster seats.

One tool that has been created is the 4 Steps for Kids program that explains which child passenger safety device is appropriate for each stage in a child's development. The 4 Steps for Kids are:

- Rear-facing infant seats in the back seat from birth to at least 1 year old and at least 20 pounds.
- Forward-facing toddler seats in the back seat from age 1 to about 4 and 20 to 40 pounds.
- Booster seats in the back seat from about age 4 and 40 pounds to at least 8, unless 4'9".



**To make for a safer ride, experts say all children ages 12 years and younger should ride in the back seat of a car.**

• Safety belts at age 8 or older or taller than 4'9". All children 12 and under should ride in the back seat.

NHTSA recommends booster seats for children from about age 4 and 40 pounds to at least age 8, unless the children are 4'9" tall.

"Adult safety belts do not adequately protect children ages 4 to 8 from death or injury in a crash," said NHTSA Administrator Jeffrey W. Runge, M.D. "Although booster seats are the best way to protect them, the vast majority of children in this age group do not ride in them."

But that could change as more states require the use of booster seats. Twenty-two states and the District of Columbia had booster seat laws as of December 2003, according to Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety. The traffic safety community continues to press for similar laws throughout the country.

Booster seat use was the focus of the 2004 Child Passenger Safety Week, February 8 to 14. This annual nationwide event promotes the importance of keeping young passengers safe in motor vehicles. A host of national nonprofit organizations and retailers partnered with NHTSA on this issue.