



Frequently Asked Questions

What is Project 8?

Project 8 is South Dakota's goal to keep kids safe by making sure they are in the best child seat for their height and weight. Project 8 targets parents, guardians, and other caregivers to promote proper child seat use and installation. The educational awareness program focuses on keeping children safe by making sure they are in the best child seat for their height and weight until they are at least 4'9". At 4'9", most children can safely wear a seat belt.

What is current South Dakota law concerning child safety seats?

Effective July 1, 2001, all occupants of a vehicle 17 years of age and under must be buckled up. Children under 5 years of age and under 40 pounds are required to use an approved child safety seat in all seating positions. This is a primary offense, which means a driver can be stopped for having children or youth not restrained in their vehicle even without another violation. Drivers are responsible for all passengers 0-17, which means you can be ticketed for not having children or youth properly restrained. This violation is a petty offense.

How do I determine which child seat is best for my child and my vehicle?

You should always read both the vehicle owner's manual and the instructions that come with the child safety seat. It's important to remember the "best" child safety seat is the one that correctly fits the child, the vehicle, and is used correctly every time.

Does Project 8 distribute child seats?

Yes. Project 8 distributes infant, toddler and booster seats to income eligible families across South Dakota as well as those who have children with special needs. Those interested in receiving a seat must show proof of financial need, such as Medicaid, WIC, or CHIP, child care assistance, or Head Start enrollment to receive each seat.

Can I use a second-hand seat?

Yes, as long as the seat is not expired; free of recalls; has not been involved in a crash; all the labels are on the seat; the instruction manual is present; you know the individual who previously owned the seat; and you know the history of the seat. Purchasing seats from garage sales and re-sale shops is not recommended.

Who provides the car seat inspections?

Regional Project 8 coordinators and Project 8 community partner agencies partner with local community organizations and businesses to provide car seat inspections free of charge to parents and guardians. The community partner agencies participate voluntarily and are not compensated by the state child passenger safety program to conduct car seat checks.

- [Find a car seat check near you](#)

What training has staff had to inspect my child's car seat?

Individuals who provide car seat inspections, have received training through the National Standardized Child Passenger Safety (CPS) Training Program (<http://www.safekids.org/certification/>). The program certifies individuals as child passenger safety technicians and instructors. The national standardized child passenger safety technician certification course is usually three to four days long and combines classroom instruction, hands-on work with car seats and vehicles, and a community safety seat checkup event. Successful completion of this course certifies the individual as a CPS technician for two years.

What do I need to bring to the inspection?

If a child is in need of a new seat, the child must be present along with the seat currently being used and proof of financial assistance. If the current seat is being inspected only, it is highly recommended that the child be present to ensure the harness straps are in the correct slot, the harness is snug, etc.

What happens during a car seat inspection?

Parents, guardians, and caregivers can come to a car seat event or individually scheduled appointment to have their child's safety seat checked by a trained or certified child passenger safety technician. Car seat inspections teach parents and caregivers how to correctly use their child's car seat or seat belt. At the checkups, trained and certified child passenger safety technicians work with parents to ensure that children are restrained according to their specific needs. You should plan for half an hour for the first child seat and 15 minutes for each additional child seat inspected.

From July 1, 2010 to June 30, 2011, 85 percent of car seats inspected in South Dakota were used incorrectly, so car seats are checked to be sure:

1. They have not been recalled.
2. They meet federal safety standards.
3. They are installed correctly.
4. They are appropriate according to the height and weight

The #1 goal of every child passenger safety check is that every child leaves safer than they came!

What is LATCH?

LATCH stands for Lower Anchors and Tethers for Children. LATCH is an installation system that was created to standardize the way child safety seats are attached to vehicles without having to use a seat belt. LATCH consists of two lower attachments and an upper tether on a child safety seat that anchors and connects with lower anchors and a top tether built into a vehicle's back seat. LATCH is required on most child safety seats and vehicles manufactured after September 1, 2002. LATCH is not required for booster seats, car beds and vests.

What are common misuses of child seats?

Through our inspections we have found the following misuses.

- Harness too loose.
- Harness clip too low (could result in injury based on where located)
- Seat does not fit child's height and weight
- Infant seat not reclined to 45 degrees
- Seat not tight (should not move than 1 inch to either side)

When can my child move from a rear facing to a forward facing seat?

The best way to keep your child safe is to keep him or her rear-facing as long as possible. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that infants be placed in rear-facing seats until they reach the top height or maximum weight limit allowed by the car seat manufacturer.

A child should NEVER be switched from rear facing to forward facing before one year old AND 20 lbs. Please read the seat manual as many seats are approved for children over 20lbs to ride rear facing.

When can my child sit in the front seat?

Children 12 and under are safest riding in the back seat. Kids are safest when riding in the rear middle seat. REMEMBER: Never place a rear-facing infant seat in front of a passenger air bag.

When is my child ready to use a seat belt?

Until age 8, most children have not developed strong hipbones, and their legs and body are too short to allow for proper fit of a safety belt. Safety belts are designed for adults. Always check belt fit on the child in every vehicle. A belt-positioning booster seat may be needed in some vehicles and not in others.

To be able to fit a safety belt, a child must:

1. Be tall enough to sit without slouching,
2. Keep his/her back against the vehicle seat back,
3. Keep his/her knees completely bent over the edge of the seat,
4. Keep his/her feet flat on the floor, and
5. Be able to stay comfortably seated this way.
6. The lap belt must fit low and tight across the upper thighs. The shoulder belt should rest over the center of the shoulder and across the chest.

NEVER put the shoulder belt under the child's arm or behind the child's back. This can cause severe head injuries or internal injuries in a crash. If the safety belt does not fit properly the child should use a belt-positioning booster seat.