



State of California—Health and Human Services Agency  
Department of Health Care Services



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GOVERNOR

June 26, 2012

CHDP Provider Information Notice No.: 12-03

TO: ALL CHILD HEALTH AND DISABILITY PREVENTION (CHDP)  
PROGRAM PROVIDERS AND MEDI-CAL MANAGED CARE PLANS

SUBJECT: REVISION OF INJURY HEALTH ASSESSMENT GUIDELINE TO  
INCORPORATE ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT CHILD  
BOOSTER SEAT REQUIREMENTS

The purpose of this CHDP Provider Information Notice No. 12-03 is to inform CHDP Providers about updated recommendations and legislation surrounding car seat safety for infants and children. This information adds to, but does not supercede, the Injury section of the CHDP Health Assessment Guide (HAG), Section 56.

Existing California Law SB 929<sup>1</sup> (2011) states: Children under the age of 8 must be secured in a car seat or booster seat. Children under the age of 8 who are 4'9" or taller may be secured by a safety belt in the back seat.

An additional recommendation of the AAP and the NHTSA is that "children should stay in a booster seat until adult seat belts fit correctly, usually when a child reaches about 4'9" in height and is between 8 to 12 years of age." The NHTSA states the following recommendations:

- **Birth – 12 months:** The child under age 1 should always ride in a rear-facing car seat.
- **1 – 3 years:** Keep the child rear-facing as long as possible until he or she reaches the top height or weight allowed by your car seat's manufacturer. Once the child has outgrown the rear-facing car seat, switch to a forward-facing car seat with a harness.

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<sup>1</sup> SB 929, Author: Evans. Chaptered October 4, 2011. Prohibits a person from operating a motor vehicle on a highway unless that person and all passengers 16 years of age or older are properly restrained by a safety belt. This bill would define the phrase "properly restrained by a safety belt."

- 4 – 7 years: Keep the child forward-facing as long as possible until he or she reaches the top height or weight allowed by your car seat's manufacturer. Once the child has outgrown the forward-facing 5 point harness car seat, switch to a booster seat, but have the child remain in the back seat.
- 8 – 12 years: Keep the child in the booster seat until he or she is big enough to fit in a seat belt properly. The seat belt must lie snugly across the upper thighs, not the stomach. The shoulder belt should lie snug across the shoulder and chest and not across the neck or face.

### Car Seat Safety:

It is recommended that the adult driver consider the above criteria and recommendations in determining whether the child over 8 years of age is ready to transition from a booster seat to a standard lap and shoulder belt.

Additional recent recommendations from NHTSA include:

- Always read child seat manufacturers' instructions and the vehicle owner's manual for important information on height and weight limits and how to install the car seat using the seat belt or the LATCH system.
- All children under 13 should ride in the back seat.
- Children in rear-facing car seats should never ride in front of an active passenger air bag.

The revised section and tables may be downloaded from the following link:

<http://www.dhcs.ca.gov/services/chdp/Pages/Pub156.aspx>

Your continuing participation in the CHDP Program is greatly appreciated. If you have any questions about other CHDP HAG issues, please contact your local CHDP program office.

Sincerely,

Robert Dimand, MD,  
Chief Medical Officer  
Children's Medical Services