**Child Passenger Safety Talking Points**

**Key Messages**

1. **The best way to protect a child from serious injury or death in a car crash is to make sure they are properly restrained and in the correct restraint for their weight, height and age.**

* In the past five years (2014 – 2018), 18 children (ages 0–7) were killed in motor vehicles and only 39 percent of the victims were known to be properly secured.
* Of the 89 children (ages 0–7) seriously injured in motor vehicles in the past five years, only 49 percent of the victims were known to be properly secured.
* Of the 17,237 children ages 0–7 who were properly restrained in the past five years, 87 percent were not injured, and almost 12.5 percent sustained only minor or possible injuries.

1. **Important ways to keep your kids safe.**

* In Minnesota, three out of every four child restraints are used incorrectly — meaning children are usually not properly secured or not using the correct type of restraint.
  + Incorrect restraint use or improper fit can contribute to serious injury, ejection and/or death in traffic crashes.
* New recommendation from American Association of Pediatrics — parents should keep their toddlers in rear-facing car seats until age two, or until they reach the maximum height and weight for their seat.
* CPS law requires children to be in child restraint or booster seat until age 8 and 4 feet 9 inches tall. This makes booster seats a requirement — children cannot ride in a seat belt alone until they are age 8 or 4 feet 9, whichever comes first. Recommended to keep child in a booster based on their height rather than age. This means a child may still need a booster after age 8.

1. **Child car seat laws and recommendations are in place to protect children**

* Make sure your child is in the proper restraint. Not all car seats fit all children or vehicles – try it before you buy it.
* Educate your children on the importance of being properly restrained as they may try to pressure you to get rid of the booster seat or sit up front as they get older. Children should remain in the back seat until they are 13 years old.
* Replace child restraints after six years or if it was involved in a crash.

**Background/Campaign Information**

**General Campaign Information**

* Child Passenger Safety Week: Sept. 18 – 24.
* A vehicle is the most dangerous place a child can be — traffic crashes are the leading killer of youth. That is why it’s important that parents properly restrain their child in the correct safety seat.
* A CPS violation can cost more than $100. Those cited for not having a restraint can have that fee waived if they show proof of restraint purchase by 14 days after the violation.
* Parents are encouraged to visit buckleupkids.mn.gov for more information on child passenger safety and to view instructional car seat installation videos and find car seat clinics in your area to ensure your seat is properly installed.
* Make sure child restraints are installed correctly. Seats should be secured tight and not shift more than an inch side-to-side or out from the vehicle’s seat. The restraint’s harness should fit snug on the child — so the harness material at the shoulders cannot be pinched.
* Parents are encouraged to visit buckleupkids.mn.gov for more information on child passenger safety and to view instructional car seat installation videos and find car seat clinics in your area to ensure your seat is properly installed.
* A child needs to progress through different restraints as they age and grow: rear-facing infant seats, forward-facing toddler seats, booster seats, and seat belts.
* The most commonly ignored restraint is a booster seat — seat lifts that help seat belts fit children properly. Poor seat belt fit can contribute to serious injury, ejection and death in traffic crashes.
* Booster seats are required by Minnesota law. Children need to ride in a booster typically starting around age 4. It safest to keep kids riding in a booster until 4-feet 9-inches or at least age 8.
* A sign a belt does not fit properly is if it rubs against a child’s neck, or the child is tucks the belt behind their back.
* Kids that are shorter than 4 feet 9 inches aren’t ready to use a seat belt alone because a seat belt does not fit them properly. Poor belt fit can contribute to death or serious injury — including ejection and serious abdominal, spine, and neck injury.
* A child is ready to ride in a seat belt alone when they can sit with their back against the vehicle seat, knees bent completely over the seat and feet touching the floor.
* Common child passenger safety mistakes are:
  + - Turning a child from a rear-facing restraint to a forward-facing restraint too soon.
    - Restraint is not secured tight enough — it should not shift more than one inch side-to-side or out from the seat.
    - Harness on the child is not tight enough — if you can pinch harness material, it’s too loose.
    - Retainer clip is up too high or too low — should be at the child’s armpit level.
    - The child is in the wrong restraint — don’t rush your child into a seat belt.
* The best child seat for your child is the seat that best fits your vehicle, the one that fits your child and the one that you can use correctly every time. When purchasing, many stores will allow you to try the seat in your vehicle.

**Minnesota Child Car Seat Law and Steps**

* In Minnesota, all children must be in a child restraint until they are 4’9” tall, or at least age 8, whichever comes first.
* Rear-facing child seats - Newborns to at least 1 year and 20 pounds; recommended up to age 2. It is safest to keep a child rear-facing as long as possible.
* Forward-facing seats - Age 2 until around age 4. It's preferable to keep children in a harnessed restraint until they reach the maximum weight limit.
* Booster seats - Use after outgrowing a forward-facing harnessed restraint; safest to remain in a booster until 4 feet 9 inches tall, or at least age 8, whichever comes first.
* Seat belts - Use when children can sit with their back against the vehicle seat and have their knees bent comfortably over the edge with their feet touching the floor.