

## SAFE TRANSPORT IN ALTERNATIVE TRAVEL METHODS

### Purpose

*The intent of this paper is to provide an overview of best practices for the safe transportation of infants and children in modes of transportation other than cars (e.g. buses, trains, airplanes).*

### Introduction

Child passenger safety (CPS) promotes the safety of children in all vehicles, including, but not limited to, motor vehicles, public transport, trains and airplanes. Although child passenger safety education and promotion is typically focused on passenger motor vehicles, there are established best practices for the transport of infants and children in alternative modes of travel.

### Overview of the Issue

#### *Child passenger safety (CPS)*

Motor vehicle collisions are a leading cause of fatal injury for Canadian children<sup>1</sup>. In 2018, amongst Canadian children aged 0-14, transport incidents resulted in 60 deaths, 1,505 hospitalizations and 371 permanent disabilities<sup>2</sup>. Children are especially vulnerable to injuries when they are not properly buckled in the right car seat, booster seat and/or seat belt. CPS requires consistent use of correctly installed safety seats, booster seats, or seat belts that are appropriate for a child's size and age<sup>3</sup>.

In Canada, Transport Canada sets national recommendations for the use of age-appropriate child restraint systems<sup>4</sup>. For all child safety seats (e.g. rear-facing, forward-facing, and boosters), Transport Canada recommends that children remain as long as possible in a seat that provides the greatest amount of protection, as long as the child fits within the recommended weight and height ranges<sup>4</sup>. These recommendations are not legally enforceable; it is up to the individual provinces and territories to implement and enforce child safety seat legislation<sup>5</sup>.

CPS initiatives promote the safe use of child restraint systems. These initiatives are a critical intervention to reduce injury to children and youth. We know that when car seats and other restraint systems are used correctly, they reduce the risk of a child being fatally injured by up to 71%<sup>6</sup>.

#### *Air travel*

Although airlines currently allow infants and children under age two to fly on a caregiver's lap or in arms during flight, Transport Canada strongly recommends that all infants and children are safely secured and buckled in their own seat for all phases of the flight<sup>7</sup>. The use of a car seat provides the best protection for the infant or child and minimizes the effects of unanticipated turbulence<sup>7</sup>. All car seats approved for use in Canada come with instructions for how they can be secured on an airplane seat. Booster seats cannot be used on airplanes. Older children should use the lap belt on the plane. Another option is the CARES Harness. The CARES Harness is approved by Transport Canada and can be used by a toddler or pre-school aged child from 22 – 44 pounds to help support them securely on the flight.

#### *Train travel*

Due to their size, visibility, and low speed, trains are a relatively safe mode of transport<sup>8</sup>. There is no way to secure a child restraint on a train since they do not have seat belts. Children can sit on a caregiver's lap or in

their own seat. Infants can also be worn or held using a baby wrap or other babywear. Caregivers should be reminded to bring the appropriate car seat or booster seat to use when they arrive at their destination.

#### *Public transit*

Like trains, public transit buses are relatively safe due to their size, visibility, and low speed<sup>9</sup>. Evidence shows the rate of both collision and non-collision injury on public transit is low<sup>10, 11</sup>. Public transit buses are not equipped with seat belts, so you cannot (and do not need to) install a car seat for your child. Children can sit in their own seat or on a caregiver's lap. Infants can be worn or held using a baby wrap or buckled into a stroller if permitted by the bus service.

#### *RVs*

There are many risks involved when traveling with children in a Recreational Vehicle (RV). Not all RVs undergo crash testing for the rear seat belts<sup>12</sup>. Additionally, in the event of a collision, benches, and cabinets can break apart and equipment and other materials can become projectiles. Car seats cannot be used in rear-facing or side-facing bench seating in an RV. Children must travel in a forward-facing seat in a properly installed car seat. RVs that only have lap belts are not safe for children<sup>12</sup>. A "fifth wheel" towable trailer or a truck camper/tent trailer is a safer alternative to travelling in an RV<sup>12</sup>.

#### *Ferries*

Public transit ferries are a relatively safe mode of transport<sup>13</sup>. All ferries must be equipped with life jackets in a well-marked location. Exercise caution entering and exiting the ferry. Once on the ferry, children are safest sitting in their own seat or on a caregiver's lap. Infants can be worn or held using baby wraps or other approved baby wear.

### **Best Practices (By E of Injury Prevention)**

Addressing car seat use in alternative modes of transport will require targeted interventions. These are Child Safety Link's recommendations based on car seat use best practices.

- Continue to promote to always use a car seat, booster seat or seat belt appropriate for a child's age and stage in passenger vehicles and airplanes.
- Promote safe transport in other modes of transportation using an infographic and social media.
- Include information about alternative modes of transportation in existing child passenger safety education and training.

#### **Key messages**

- Infants and children under two should be properly restrained in a car seat on an airplane.
- Car seats cannot be used on trains, buses or transit ferries and are not needed as these modes of transportation do not have the same risks as passenger vehicles.
- There are many risks when transporting children in an RV. Alternatives should be considered.

## Conclusion

Child passenger safety education and promotion is focused on passenger motor vehicles. While passenger motor vehicles remain Child Safety Link's priority due to usage and risk, it is important to promote safe transport on all modes of transport. This information may be particularly relevant to urban families and/or families travelling out of province and can be shared using targeted educational materials.

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## About Child Safety Link

Child Safety Link (CSL) is an injury prevention program at IWK Health dedicated to reducing the incidence and severity of unintentional injury to children and youth in the Maritimes. CSL is committed to working with community organizations, governments and other partners to ensure children are as safe as necessary at home, on the road and at play. The team does this through capacity building & partnerships; communication and public relations; advocacy and healthy public policy; and research and evaluation.

## Child Safety Link resources

[Child Safety Link | Child Passenger Safety](#)

LINK TO MCKENZIE INFOGRAPHIC WHEN UPLOADED

## References

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13. Car Seats for the Littles (2017). *Urban Public Transit*. <https://csftl.org/urban-public-transit/>