

# Cars, SUVs, Mini-Vans + Station Wagons

## Georgia Law:

- Every occupant **under the age of 18 must be restrained** and **children under age 8 and under 4'9" (57" inches)** must be in an approved car seat or booster seat.
- The car seat or booster seat **must be installed and used** according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- **All children** must be in the back seat.\*

## Best Practice:

- Before using a lap/shoulder belt, a safer alternative for children ages 8-12 is to use a booster seat **until they reach 4'9" (57 inches)**.
- **Children under age 13** should ride in the back seat.
- A properly fitted seat belt should lie across the upper thighs and be snug across the shoulder and chest to restrain the child safely in a crash. **It should not rest on the stomach area or across the neck.**

**AN IMPROPERLY FITTED SEAT BELT, WITH THE SHOULDER BELT PLACED UNDER THE ARM OR BEHIND THE BACK, IS NEITHER LEGAL NOR SAFE FOR CHILDREN OR ADULTS. IN A CRASH, THIS TYPE OF IMPROPER USE CAN LEAD TO SERIOUS INJURIES TO THE HEAD, SPINE OR INTERNAL ORGANS.**

\*If all rear seating positions are occupied by other children, Georgia Law does allow a child under 8 to be in an appropriate car seat/booster seat in the front seat **provided they are not rear-facing**.

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Georgia Code 40-8-76 Child Restraint Requirements and 40-8-76.1 Seat Belts.  
<https://www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/gacode>, insert code number in search box to see additional exceptions. Child Care Services – Rules, CCLC 591-1-1-.36(4)(f)1, FCCLH 290-2-3-.11(2)(j)



This series of Fact Sheets is intended to inform child care professionals about Georgia law and transporting children safely. **REVISED April 2017**

# Child Safety Restraint Systems (CSRS)

All Child Safety Restraint Systems (CSRS) **must be** used according to the CSRS and vehicle instructions.



## 1. REAR-FACING ONLY CAR SEAT

Place the child in the seat. Harness straps should be **at or below** the shoulders and snug so that you cannot pinch the webbing together at the shoulders. The chest clip should be at **armpit level**. Install the seat at an angle, not more than 45 degrees from vertical, follow car seat instructions. Keep a child rear-facing until he/she has reached the **maximum weight or height limit** specified by the car seat manufacturer.

**BEST PRACTICE:** The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) & most car seat manufacturer's recommend keeping a child rear-facing until he/she is at least 2 years of age.



## 2. CONVERTABLE, REAR-FACING + FORWARD-FACING CAR SEAT

While Rear-facing same as # 1. Forward-facing at age 2. Place the child in the seat. The seat should be in **upright** position. Harness straps should be **at or above the shoulders** and snug so that you cannot pinch the webbing together at the shoulders. The chest clip should be at **armpit level**.

**BEST PRACTICE:** The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) & most car seat manufacturer's recommend keeping a child rear-facing until he/she is at least 2 years of age.



## 3. COMBINATION CAR SEAT, FORWARD-FACING + BOOSTER SEAT

Same as #2 for forward-facing. When the child has reached the **maximum weight or height** limit allowed by the car seat manufacturer for the harness, follow the instructions for removal of the harness straps and buckle. The seat becomes a booster seat and **must be used** with the **lap and shoulder belt**. It cannot be used with a lap belt only. Use the booster seat until the child has reached the **4'9" height (57") or the upper weight limit** of the seat (80-100+ pounds).



## 4. HIGH-BACK BOOSTER

Use a high-back booster **only** after the child has outgrown the forward-facing car seat with the harness, at least age 4 or 5. Some of these boosters can be adjusted to fit the child's height. The booster seat must be used with a lap and shoulder belt. It cannot be used with the lap belt only. Position the lap belt below the arm rest and the shoulder belt between the neck and the arm of the child. Use the booster seat until the child has reached the **4'9" height (57") or the upper weight limit** of the seat (80-100+ pounds).



## 5. BACKLESS BOOSTER SEAT

A backless booster seat can **only** be used in a vehicle that has headrests or high seat backs. Use a backless booster only after the child has outgrown the forward-facing car seat. At **least age 4 or 5**. The booster seat must be used with a lap and shoulder belt. **It cannot be used with a lap belt only**. Position the lap belt below the arm rest and the shoulder belt between the neck and arm of the child. Use the booster seat until the child has reached the **4'9" height (57") or the upper weight limit** of the seat (80-100+ pounds).



## 6. LAP BELT ONLY

A lap belt only position in the vehicle should be used for installation of a car seat and not for a child. Lap belts do not provide upper body protection. As a result, serious head, spine and/or neck injuries can occur in a crash.

**BEST PRACTICE:** Keep the child in the CSRS as long as possible, until the child outgrows the seat by weight or height.

# Installation Tips and Things to Consider

## Cars, SUVs, Mini-Vans and Station Wagons

- **Always** follow the Child Safety Restraint System (CSRS) instructions for use and installation.
- Install using the seat belt or lower anchors – **Do not** use both. Read your vehicle owner's manual for information about how to lock your seat belts or location and use of LATCH connections (LATCH – **L**ower **A**nchors and **T**ethers for **C**hildren).
- Some vehicles are equipped with inflatable seat belt systems in the rear seating positions. Many CSRS **do not** permit installation with this type of seat belt system; consult your vehicle owner's manual and CSRS manufacturer's instructions or contact the CSRS manufacturer directly if additional explanation is needed.
- Place the CSRS on vehicle seat in the proper direction at the correct recline angle or upright position.
- Put the seat belt or lower anchor strap through the appropriate belt path for the direction of the seat. Convertible seats will have two paths, one for rear-facing and one for forward-facing.
- Buckle the seat belt or the lower anchor clips to anchors. Place your hand in the CSRS seat and press the vehicle seat cushion down and pull any slack out of the seat belt or lower anchor strap. Lock the seat belt. For forward-facing installations, follow instructions for use of tether-strap. Check for tightness after installation and before each use. Place hands on each side of the CSRS (near the belt path). There should be no more than 1 inch of side-to-side or forward movement at the belt path.
- Keep the child in the CSRS as long as possible, until the child outgrows the seat by weight or height.
- **WARNING!** A rear-facing CSRS should **never** be installed in the front seat of a car, SUV or 12/15 passenger van. If you must put a forward-facing seat in the front, when all other seating positions are occupied by other children, **make sure the vehicle seat is as far back as possible, especially if there is an air bag present**. Also, make sure the CSRS is securely installed to maximize the distance between the child and the airbag and/or dashboard.
- **Never** make changes to a CSRS to make it fit.
- All CSRS have labels on the seat with the manufacturer's contact information. **Always** register CSRS with the manufacturer either on-line or by mailing in the registration card. CSRS have expiration dates indicating when the CSRS should be replaced; expiration dates will vary by manufacturer.
- CSRS should **always** be purchased new and not from yard sales, consignment stores or thrift shops.
- If the CSRS has been involved in a crash, check with the CSRS manufacturer for guidelines on replacing the product.

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## Resources

### Cars, SUVs, Mini-Vans and Station Wagons

- National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) – <http://www.nhtsa.gov/safety/cps>  
Installation videos, ease of use ratings, latest information
- NHTSA Consumer Advisory: 15 Passenger Van  
<https://www.nhtsa.gov/press-releases/consumer-advisory-nhtsa-reissues-15-passenger-van-safety-caution>
- The Ultimate Car Seat Guide, Safe Kids Worldwide – Practical Tips to Keep Kids Safe in Cars, <https://www.safekids.org/ultimate-car-seat-guide/>
- NHTSA – Guideline for Safe Transportation of Pre-School Age Children in School Buses February 1999, <http://www.nhtsa.gov/people/injury/buses/guide1999/prekfinal.htm>
- NHTSA –School Bus Driver In-Service Safety Series – This refresher training provides 9 lesson modules on driving a school bus. <https://one.nhtsa.gov/people/injury/buses/updatedweb/index.html>
- American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) – [www.healthychildren.org](http://www.healthychildren.org), click on Safety & Prevention for current recommendations, other helpful resources
- Safety Equipment – Multi-Function School Activity Bus (MFSAB) / School Bus
  - C E White – [www.cewhite.com](http://www.cewhite.com), integrated seats
  - Besi Inc. – [www.besi-inc.com](http://www.besi-inc.com), add-on seats
  - EZ On products – <http://ezonpro.com>
    - IMMI/Safeguard - <https://www.safeguardseat.com/>, adjustable lap/shoulder belts and other school bus information
- Georgia Code 40-8-76 Child Restraint Requirements and 40-86.1 Seat Belts  
<https://www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/gacode>, type code number in search box to see additional exceptions.
- Recalls – [www.recalls.gov](http://www.recalls.gov)  
To provide better service in alerting the American people to unsafe, hazardous or defective products, six federal agencies with vastly different jurisdictions have joined together to create this sites as a one stop shop for U. S. Government recalls.
- National Child Passenger Safety Certification – A program of Safe Kids Worldwide <http://cert.safekids.org>
- Georgia Governor's Office of Highway Safety – [www.gohs.state.ga.us](http://www.gohs.state.ga.us)

**Trusted Internet Sources:** NHTSA • Safe Kids Worldwide or USA • GA Department of Public Health-Injury Prevention • American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) • Car Seat, Vehicle and School Bus Manufacturers  
• Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP)

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