

Booster Seat Requirements

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Issue

What are the height, weight, and age thresholds for booster seat use under state and federal law?

This report updates OLR Report [2016-R-0228](#).

Summary

State law requires that any child under age eight or weighing under 60 pounds be placed in a child restraint system (i.e., a “car seat” or “booster seat”) while being transported in a vehicle. Children above this height and weight must either sit in a child restraint system or use a seat belt ([CGS § 14-100a\(d\)\(2\)](#)). If the child is under age two or under 30 pounds, the restraint system must be rear-facing ([CGS § 14-100a\(d\)\(1\)\(A\)](#)). If a child's age and weight fall into two different categories (e.g., a child is less than two years old but weighs more than 30 pounds, the more restrictive requirement (rear-facing car seat in this instance) applies.

The law also requires children restrained in booster seats to be anchored by a seat belt that includes a shoulder belt, but it does not list any height or weight requirements specifically for booster seat use ([CGS § 14-100a\(d\)\(4\)](#)).

Federal regulations prohibit booster seat manufacturers from recommending booster seat use for children who weigh less than 30 pounds ([49 C.F.R. § 571.213](#)). The regulations do not provide

Child Passenger Safety Statistics

According to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

- “Car seat use reduces the risk of death to infants (aged > 1 year) by 71% and to toddlers (aged 1-4 years) by 54%.”
- “Booster seat use reduces the risk of serious injury by 45% for children age 4-8 compared with seat belt use alone.”
- “For older children and adults, seat belt use reduces the risk for death and serious injury by approximately half.”

Source: CDC, “[Child Passenger Safety: Get the Facts](#)”

specific height or age limits for booster seat use. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) also provides child seat guidelines and recommendations based on the child's age.

NHTSA Recommendations

NHTSA is a branch of the federal Department of Transportation that oversees motor vehicle and equipment safety. The following image depicts the ages for which NHTSA recommends child car seat, booster seat, or seat belt use.

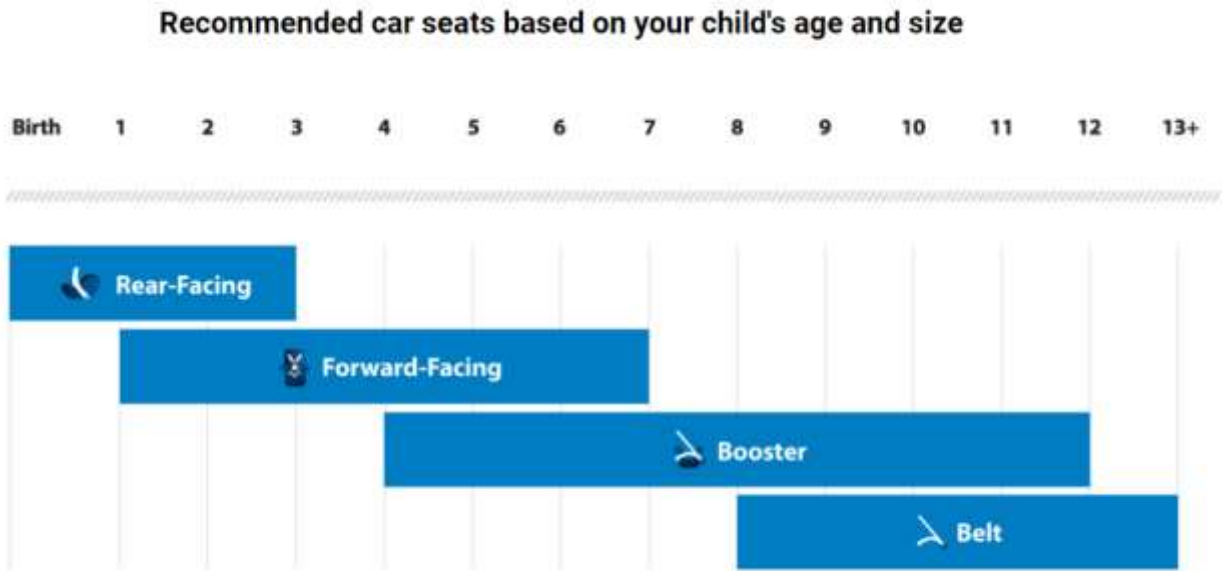


Image Source: [NHTSA](#)

NHTSA provides the following additional guidance to parents and caregivers when selecting the appropriate child restraint system:

1. Children ages one to three should ride in a rear-facing car seat and children ages four to seven should ride in a forward-facing car seat until they reach the top height or weight limit recommended by the seat manufacturer.
2. Once a child outgrows a forward-facing car seat, he or she should ride in a booster seat in the back seat until a seat belt properly fits.
3. When a seat belt properly fits, the lap belt lies snug across the child's upper thighs and the shoulder belt lies snug across his or her shoulders and chest.
4. Children should continue to ride in the back seat until at least age 13.

NHTSA also provides a tool on its [website](#) that a parent or caregiver can use to select a restraint system by entering the child's birthdate, height, and weight.

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