

Recommended Criteria for Group Purchase of Child Restraints

These criteria apply to institutional models available from major manufacturers.

Basic Guidelines

- Order directly from the manufacturer or from a distributor to get the best prices.
- If it is necessary to go out for bids, choose the product best suited to the needs of the program first; then tailor the request for bids to match.
- Specify that all seats shipped must be recently manufactured and check date stickers when received. Old stock may not meet current safety standards. Also, some child restraint manufacturers stamp an "expiration date" (five to nine years) on their products.
- If needed, make sure instruction booklets are available in Spanish and order them.
- All child restraints manufactured or distributed in the United States must be certified to meet Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard 213.

General recommended features

1. Harness that is adjustable from the front while the seat is installed.
2. Easy-to-remove, machine washable, fabric cover.

Infant-Only Safety Seats (Rear Facing)

- Minimum weight: none or 3-5 lbs.; maximum weight: 22-35 lbs.
- Not the best choice for most programs serving low-income families, since it usually must be replaced within the first year.
- May be appropriate for specialized programs, such as short-term loans or gifts to new parents by hospitals or for programs for teen parents without personal vehicles or parents of preemies.

Recommended features for infant-only seats

1. Maximum weight at least 30 lbs.
2. Five-point harness with at least three sets of shoulder strap slots and two crotch strap locations.
3. For programs serving newborns, side-facing car beds should be available for babies who must lie flat. They may be rented or lent to families, since they are usually only needed for a few weeks.*

Convertible Safety Seats (May be used Rear Facing and Forward Facing)

- May be used rear facing (recommended until at least age two) or forward facing.
- Current models can be used facing rearward up to 30-45 lbs., forward up to 40-80 lbs.
- Best choice for most programs, since they can be adjusted to fit babies, toddlers, and older children.

Recommended features for convertible seats

1. Rear facing up to at least 35 lbs.; forward facing up to at least 50 lbs.
2. Five-point harness (no shield) with at least 4 sets of shoulder strap slots and 2 or 3 crotch strap locations.
3. Pre-installed tether strap with tilt-lock adjuster.

*See #173 at www.carseat.org and American Academy of Pediatrics policy statements at <http://www.aap.org/healthtopics/carseatsafety.cfm>.

Forward-Facing Seats with Harness

- Minimum weight: 20-30 lbs.; maximum weight 40-80 lbs.
- Not recommended for children under age two.
- Some models (“combination seats”) have removable harness and may be used with harness up to 40-80 lbs. or as booster up to 80-100 lbs.

Recommended features for forward-facing seats

1. Harness certified for use up to at least 65 lbs.
2. Higher shoulder strap slots to fit taller children. Ask for measurements and compare.
3. Pre-installed tether strap with tilt-lock adjuster.
4. For combination seats, make sure it works well as booster (lap belt touches thighs; shoulder belt touches chest), especially for children at the lower end of the age/weight scale. *

Boosters (Must be Used with Vehicle Lap-Shoulder Belt)

- Minimum weight: 30-40 lbs.; maximum: 80-120 lbs.
- Not recommended for children under 3-4.

Recommended types*

(Programs should have both types, if possible.)

1. A belt-positioning booster with an adjustable headrest and removable back is the most versatile choice. This type of booster helps keep a sleeping child positioned properly under the vehicle belt and positions the shoulder belt comfortably without preventing it from retracting properly. A backrest is necessary for whiplash protection if the child’s head is not supported by the vehicle seatback or head restraint.
2. Backless boosters are less expensive and easy to carry, which makes them convenient for carpooling and play dates. They work well as long as the child is able to sit upright throughout the trip and the head is supported by the vehicle seatback. Older children may prefer using a backless booster because it is less visible.

*For help in selecting combination seats or boosters, refer to Status Report of December 22, 2009, published by Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (<http://www.iihs.org/externaldata/srdata/docs/sr4411.pdf>).

Safety Seats and Harnesses with Higher Maximum Weights

- **Britax** Advocate CS, Boulevard CS, Decathlon, or Marathon CS (5-65 lbs.), Roundabout 50 (5-50 lbs.). All convertibles rear facing to 35 lbs. Frontier (25-80 lbs. with harness; 40 lbs. and up as booster). Regent (22-80 lbs.)
- **Dorel** Complete Air (5-50 lbs, rear facing to 40 lbs.). Alpha Omega/AO Elite/Elite/Luxe/All inOne/3-in1/Deluxe (5-50 lbs. with harness; rear facing to 35 lbs.; 40-100 lbs. as booster). Apex 65 (22-65 lbs. with harness; 40-100 lbs. as booster). Go Hybrid (22-65 lbs. with harness, tether required; 40-100 lbs. as backless booster). Apex and Go must be supported by vehicle seatback.
- **Evenflo** Titan Elite or Triumph Advance (5-50 lbs., rear facing to 35 lbs.). Generations 65 (20-65 lbs. with harness; 30-100 lbs. as booster). Maestro (20-50 lbs. with harness; 40-100 lbs. as booster).
- **E-Z-On** vests and harnesses (various sizes available)
- **Graco** My Ride 65 (5-65 lbs, rear facing to 40 lbs.)
- **Learning Curve** True Fit Premiere (5-65 lbs., rear facing to 35 lbs.)
- **Orbit Baby** Toddler (15-50 lbs.; rear facing to 35 lbs.)
- **Recaro** Como or Signo G2 (5-70 lbs., 35 lbs. rear facing)
- **Safety Angel** Ride Rytte Booster (may be used with E-Z-On Kid Y harness)
- **Safe Traffic System** Ride Safer Travel Vests (35-60 lbs., 50-80 lbs.)
- **Sunshine Kids** Radian65SL (5-65 lbs.), Radian80SL (5-80 lbs.), RadianXTSL (5-80 lbs.). All rear facing to 45 lbs.

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