

# 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 eight 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.

## Recommended features

1. Harness that is adjustable from the front while the seat is installed.
2. Easy-to-remove, machine washable, fabric cover.
3. Two-part plastic retainer clip (may help keep shoulder straps in place for a toddler with busy fingers).

## **Infant-Only Safety Seats (Most are for babies from 5 lbs. to about 6-9 months old)**

- This type of seat is not the best choice for most programs serving low-income families. It 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.
- 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.\*

## Recommended features

1. Five-point harness with at least three sets of shoulder strap slots and two crotch strap locations.
2. May be used with or without a detachable base.
3. Consider ordering a few seats with no minimum weight for small newborns.

## **Convertible Safety Seats (For infants and children up to age 3-4 or more)**

- May be used rear facing (recommended until at least 18 to 24 months) or forward facing.
- All current models are certified to face rearward up to at least 30 lbs.; forward-facing limit varies.

## Recommended features

1. Five-point harness (no shield) with 4 sets of shoulder strap slots and 2 or 3 crotch strap locations.
2. Maximum weight 50 lbs. or more.
3. Pre-installed tether strap with tilt-lock adjuster.

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

## **Combination Seats (For children at least one year old up to 80-100 lbs.)**

- May not be used rear facing.
- Used with harness up to 40-65 lbs., then remove harness and use as booster.

### Recommended feature

1. Harness certified for use up to 65 lbs.
2. For best fit with a variety of children, choose a model with high strap slots, two crotch strap locations, and low sides that allow the lap portion of the belt to touch the child's thighs.

## **Boosters (For children from about 4 years/40 lbs. up to 80-100 lbs.)**

### 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.

## **Safety Seats with 5-Point Harness, Vests/Harnesses for Children Over 40 Pounds**

- Needed for children who ride in older vehicles that do not have shoulder belts in the rear seat.
  - Needed for children who have outgrown a regular safety seat (usually at 40 lbs.) and are too "wiggly" or too young (under 3-4) to ride in a booster.
  - Provides optimum protection for any child from 40 lbs. up to maximum weight available.
1. Britax Boulevard, Decathlon, or Marathon (5-65 lbs.); Britax Regent (22-80 lbs.)
  2. Dorel Apex 65 (22 to 65 lbs. with harness; 40 to 100 lbs. as booster. Must be supported by vehicle seatback.)
  3. Evenflo Titan Elite or Triumph Advance (5-50 lbs.)
  4. E-Z-On vests and harnesses (various sizes available)
  5. Fisher-Price Safe Voyage Deluxe Convertible (5-55 lbs.)
  6. IMMI SafeGuard Child Seat (22-65 lbs.) SafeGuard Go (30-60 lbs. with harness, tether required; 40-100 lbs. as backless booster. Must be supported by vehicle seatback)
  7. Recaro Como or Signo (5-70 lbs.)
  8. Safety Angel Ride Ryte Booster (may be used with E-Z-On Kid Y harness)
  9. Safe Traffic System Ride Safer Travel Vests (35-60 lbs., 50-80 lbs.)
  10. Sunshine Kids Radian65 (5-65 lbs.), Radian80 (5-80 lbs.)

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