

## **Nebraska Department of Transportation, Highway Safety Office (NDOT-HSO) Nebraska Child Safety Seat Inspection Station Guidelines**

### **Background**

The effectiveness of safety belts and child safety seats in preventing injury and death in motor vehicles is well established. Motor vehicle crashes remain the leading cause of unintentional injury-related deaths among children ages 1 to 14 in Nebraska. The NDOT Highway Safety Office (HSO) is dedicated to reducing fatalities and injuries resulting from motor vehicle crashes. Increasing knowledge regarding occupant restraints (safety belts, child safety seats, and air bags) will assist in reducing motor vehicle fatality and injury crashes. The goal of the inspection station is to increase the usage rate of child safety seats by 3.1% from the observed 2014 rate of 96.9 % to 100% for the year 2016.

It is estimated a large percentage of children who are placed in child safety seats in Nebraska are improperly restrained. With the increasing quantity and types of vehicles on the road coupled with the increasing quantity and types of child restraints, choosing the correct child safety seat has become a difficult and confusing task for parents/caregivers. Furthermore, adult safety belts do not adequately protect children ages 4 to 8 (approximate weight 40 to 80 pounds) from injury in a crash. Although booster seats are the best way to protect these children, nationally only 6% of booster seat-age children ride properly restrained.

Lack of access to affordable child safety seats and booster seats contributes to a lower usage rate among low-income families. However, research shows 95 percent of low-income families who own a child safety seat use it. Improving access to affordable child restraint systems and educating parents/caregivers about proper installation and use are key components of improving usage rates.

### **Definition of an Inspection Station**

An "Inspection Station" is a designated place where people can obtain educational information and assistance in choosing the correct child restraint system, how to properly install it, and how to properly secure their child into that child safety seat. Inspection stations are available to the entire community and operate as a public service.

Successful inspection stations have permanent locations with regular/set days and hours of operation (often by appointment). In order to avoid burnout, it is important to keep the time commitment expectations from staff reasonable. Before submitting an application, one should determine how the public will know about the services. It is recommended that an inspection station function on an appointment-based vs. drop-in schedule. Monthly activity logs documenting the number of clients served, seats distributed, and inventory report form must be submitted to the HSO.

The "Operation of Inspection Stations for Child Restraint Use" located at [www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/research/InspectionStations/](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/research/InspectionStations/) is an excellent resource for information.

**Stationary inspection sites:**

A stationary inspection site offers the parents/caregivers a place to have their child's safety seat inspected. The inspection station can be established indoors or outdoors. An indoor setting (i.e., drive-through bay) is often preferred because it is not affected by the weather. Ideally, a vehicle will enter in one side of the facility and exit out the other side to avoid vehicles operating in reverse and endangering others. The storage of child safety seats requires a large area, and it is best to store seats on-site when possible.

**Mobile sites:**

In some communities, a more effective way to provide parents/caregivers with services is with a mobile system; traveling on a scheduled basis to designated locations where the inspection station is set up and inspections are performed. Mobile sites are required to host an inspection event a minimum of once per quarter (every 3 months).

Utilizing the National SAFE KIDS checklist, the Inspection Station Personnel document what they find when the vehicle arrives at the inspection station. Personnel will inspect the child safety seats for recalls, note obvious errors, obtain a history of the seat, and verify the child safety seat is correct for the size, weight, and age of the child. Inspection stations are not an "installation service." Certified child passenger safety (CPS) technicians inspect the child safety seats and demonstrate proper installation teaching parents/caregivers how to properly install the child safety seat in their vehicle(s). Once educated, the parent/caregiver then installs the child safety seat in the vehicle and secures the child in the safety seat. Lastly, the CPS technician inspects the parents/caregivers installation.

Inspection stations have a variety of child restraint systems available to assure no child leaves the inspection station in an unsafe manner. Child safety seats obtained through the HSO are only to be distributed to **low-income** parents/caregivers when the child is present or the woman is pregnant. Voluntary donations for child safety seats obtained through the HSO may be accepted to offset costs of future seats or other child passenger safety-related expenses (i.e., weight scale, Safe Kids Forms, postage, water noodles). Federal regulations require child safety seats not be distributed to for-profit businesses such as daycares. Nebraska child safety seat inspection stations are required to maintain and utilize low-income guidelines. Partnering with an agency that currently determines income eligibility may be beneficial. If donations are accepted, a separate account should be established for the donations received.

**Staffing the Inspection Station**

While clearly the most critical positions at an inspection station are the child safety seat technicians performing the actual seat check, other duties and responsibilities are very important and must be handled efficiently and professionally. In a perfect world, all the components of a successful inspection station would be handled by different people; however in most cases one person may have to fill several roles.

**Administrative Coordinator** – A point person handles the administrative needs of an inspection station. This person is responsible for receiving phone calls from parents, scheduling appointments for inspections, requesting parents to bring instruction books, securing technicians, ordering supplies, manage the data accumulated from the inspection forms, filing the inspection forms, ordering handouts, and copying the most recent recall list for use during inspections.

**Greeter** – The greeter may provide traffic control, explain the inspection station process to the parents/caregivers, provide the inspection form and educational handouts to parents/caregivers, and help to ensure an overall smooth operation.

**Scribes/Recorders** – This person collects data from the parents/caregivers, records information found by the CPS technician and checks for product recalls. A National SAFE KIDS checklist must be completed for each child safety seat inspected.

**Inspectors/ CPS Technicians** – Nationally certified CPS technicians perform the inspections. The CPS technician's main role is as an educator. He/she is responsible for the inspection of the child safety seat, instruction to the parents/caregivers on how to properly install the child safety seat, secure the child, and deciding whether or not to replace a seat. In addition, the CPS technician should also ensure any "bad" seats are disposed of to prevent further use.

### **Training and Retraining**

National certification addresses the liability concerns often raised when discussing child seat inspections. While no one can guarantee freedom from the possibility of litigation, by following the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's standardized training and technician certification should provide some assurances of technical competency. An organization's general liability policy regarding staff and volunteers should be researched prior to submitting an application.

The individuals checking child safety seats must be trained to inspect the child safety seats, effectively discuss, and demonstrate proper installation techniques to parents/caregivers. It is essential all CPS technicians have up-to-date training. A CPS technician update is held annually in Nebraska. Inspection stations are required to have at least one CPS technician attend the annual CPS technician update.

### **Additional Resources and Supplies**

Click on topic:

[Child Seat Safety Complaints](#)

[Register Your Car Seat](#)

[Child Seat Recall Campaign Listing](#)

[Car Seats to Car Keys: Keeping Kids Safe.](#)

[Car Seat Checklist for Parents](#)

[Traffic Safety Materials Order Form](#)

[NHTSA Material Order System, Child Safety Seat](#)

[Child Passenger Safety Seat Mini-Grant Contract Application and Award](#)

**Items to Purchase**

Clipboards, Pens, File Folders, Scale, Tape Measure, and Water/Pool Noodles.

**Safety Belt Policy/Drug Free Workplace Policy**

All applications must include a copy of the organization's drug-free workplace policy and safety belt use policy.

*Revised 8/3/2017*