NEBRASKA

Occupant Protection Program Assessment

March 13 – 17, 2017

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The mission of the Nebraska Department of Roads Highway Safety Office (NDOR-HSO) is to reduce the State’s traffic crashes, injuries, and fatalities on its roads through leadership, innovation, facilitation, and program support in partnership with other public and private organizations. The Occupant Protection Assessment Team framed their recommendations to be consistent with the accomplishment of this mission.

In 2015, 246 people died in traffic crashes in Nebraska, up from 225 such deaths in 2014. Nearly half of these individuals (118) were passenger vehicle occupants who were not restrained at the time of the crash. In 2015, only 28 percent of fatally injured occupants in Nebraska were restrained at the time of the crash. Crash data also show that nighttime unrestrained fatalities increased from 53 in 2012 to 77 in 2015.

Nebraska continues to utilize *Click It or Ticket* (CIOT) messaging for its seat belt campaigns. During 2016, the State conducted CIOT mobilizations twice during the year: May 23-June 5 and November 21-27.

Nebraska is scheduled to implement another change in its seat belt survey methodology for 2017 based upon National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) requirements. After its first time implementing this type of change in the State’s seat belt survey, Nebraska reported a significant 5.6 percentage point drop in its seat belt use rate (from 84.2 percent in 2011 to 78.6 percent in 2012). The 2016 seat belt use rate is currently at 83.3 percent.

Nebraska’s seat belt law permits secondary enforcement only. Law enforcement officers may issue a ticket for not wearing a seat belt only when there is another citable traffic infraction. This limitation and other weaknesses in the law, including a low fine ($25) and absence of court costs, have contributed to relatively modest levels of enforcement activity and low levels of seat belt use. Moreover, the child restraint provisions require child restraint use only up to age six, after which children may legally use the vehicle seat belts, which are designed for adults. For children above age six, the enforcement provision is secondary, thus restricting officers’ ability to ensure child passenger safety on Nebraska’s roadways.

With support and coordination from NDOR-HSO, certified child passenger safety (CPS) technicians and instructors in the State collaborate with and support one another to teach certification courses, share program resources, and support CPS technicians throughout the State.

Using a seat belt or child restraint is the single most effective habit that Nebraska roadway users can adopt to protect themselves in a crash. Therefore, the State should have a robust occupant protection program that strategically uses a combination of strong laws, enforcement, communication, education, and data and evaluation to increase and/or maintain seat belt and child restraint use.

Using the fundamental elements of the *Uniform Guidelines for State Highway Safety Programs for Occupant Protection*, this assessment report identifies strengths and challenges of Nebraska’s occupant protection program and provides recommendations for each of the following areas:
program management; legislation, regulation, and policy; law enforcement; communication; occupant protection for children; outreach; and data and evaluation.

The highlighted key recommendations in this report are recommendations the assessment team found to be the most crucial for improving the State’s occupant protection program. While Nebraska has initiatives in place to improve its program, there is room for growth. The recommendations presented in this report are intended to help increase occupant restraint use and decrease unrestrained fatalities and injuries in Nebraska.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The assessment team would like to acknowledge Fred Zwonechek, Highway Safety Administrator; Linda Kearns, Traffic Safety Specialist Supervisor; and Simera Reynolds, Traffic Safety Specialist in the Nebraska Department of Roads Highway Safety Office.

The team would also like to acknowledge the dedication and hard work of all those individuals who made time to share their knowledge and expertise during the assessment.

This assessment benefitted from the guidance of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration regional and headquarters staff: Sherri Cannon and Janice Hartwill-Miller, and support from their respective supervisors, Regional Administrator Susan DeCourcy and Occupant Protection Division Chief Maria Vegega.

Special recognition and appreciation also goes to Belinda Oh for her able assistance throughout the assessment process and in producing this report.

Each member of the team appreciates the opportunity to have served on this assessment and hopes that consideration and implementation of the proposed recommendations will enable Nebraska to continue to improve its occupant protection program.

Note:

The information included in this document has been collected from a variety of sources including interviews, official documents, websites, and other materials. Sources may not be consistent. Some copyrighted material has been used under the “Fair Use” Doctrine of the U.S. copyright statute.
ASSESSMENT BACKGROUND

The purpose of the Occupant Protection Program Assessment is to provide the Nebraska Department of Roads Highway Safety Office (NDOR-HSO) with a review of the State’s occupant protection program through the identification of the program’s strengths and accomplishments, the identification of challenging areas, and the provision of recommendations for improvement. The assessment can be used as a tool for occupant protection program planning purposes, for deciding how to allocate existing and new resources, and for determining programmatic focus.

The assessment process provides an organized approach for measuring program progress by following the format of the Uniform Guidelines for State Highway Safety Programs, Highway Safety Program Guideline No. 20, Occupant Protection (November 2006). The guideline that precedes each section of this report is taken from this document. The U.S. Department of Transportation developed the Uniform Guidelines for State Highway Safety Programs in collaboration with the states.

The Occupant Protection Program Assessment examined significant components of the State’s occupant protection program. All states, in cooperation with their political subdivisions, should have a comprehensive occupant protection program that educates and motivates its citizens to use available motor vehicle occupant protection systems. A combination of strong laws, enforcement, public information, and education is necessary to achieve significant, lasting increases in seat belt and child restraint use, which will reduce fatalities and decrease the number and severity of injuries.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) headquarters and regional office staff facilitated the Occupant Protection Program Assessment. Working with NDOR-HSO, NHTSA recommended a team of five individuals with demonstrated expertise in various aspects of occupant protection program development, implementation, and evaluation.

The assessment consisted of a thorough review of State-provided occupant protection program briefing materials and interviews with state and community level program directors, coordinators, advocates, traffic safety partners, law enforcement personnel, and NDOR-HSO staff. The conclusions drawn by the assessment team were based upon, and limited by, the facts and information provided in the briefing materials and by the various experts who made presentations to the team.

Following the completion of the presentations, the team convened to review and analyze the information presented. The team noted the occupant protection program’s strengths and challenges as well as recommendations for improvement. On the final day of the on-site assessment, the team briefed NDOR-HSO on the results of the assessment and discussed major points and recommendations.

The assessment team noted that many occupant protection and general traffic safety activities are conducted throughout the state of Nebraska. It is not the intent of this report to thoroughly document all of these successes, nor to give credit to the large number of individuals at all levels
who are dedicated to traffic safety. By its very nature, the report focuses on areas that need improvement. This should not be viewed as criticism. Instead, it is an attempt to provide assistance to all levels for improvement, which is consistent with the overall goals of these types of assessments.

This report is a consensus report. The recommendations provided are based on the unique characteristics of the State and what the assessment team members believe the State, its political subdivisions, and partners could do to improve the reach and effectiveness of its occupant protection program.

This assessment report is not a NHTSA document; it belongs to the State. The State may use the report as the basis for planning occupant protection program improvements, assessing legislative priorities, providing for additional training, evaluating funding priorities, or other purposes.
KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

(Note: Key Recommendations are **BOLDED** in each individual section)

I. PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

- Incorporate additional data sources and conduct more in-depth analyses of the data to better target populations and areas of the State where occupant protection funding could be most effective.

- Implement an annual training opportunity for traffic safety subgrantees focusing on highlights of priority and problem areas for all attendees plus overall grant management requirements for new personnel; use this opportunity to share best practices in problem identification, planning, and implementation of occupant protection projects.

II. LEGISLATION, REGULATION, AND POLICY

- Allow primary enforcement for violating Nebraska’s seat belt law.

- Require proper use of occupant protection for all ages in all seating positions of a moving vehicle.

III. LAW ENFORCEMENT

- Establish a Law Enforcement Liaison (LEL) program. The position(s) should be staffed by current or former law enforcement personnel who have the ability to garner the support of law enforcement executives to work toward the highway safety goals of the Nebraska Department of Roads Highway Safety Office. The LELs should also be able to coordinate and facilitate training programs to better inform the law enforcement community about highway safety concerns, practices, and procedures.

- Encourage all law enforcement agencies in the State to increase occupant protection enforcement both throughout the year and during high-visibility enforcement mobilizations.
KEY RECOMMENDATIONS (continued)

IV. COMMUNICATION

- Strengthen public information in support of *Click It or Ticket* (CIOT) seat belt mobilizations by the following:
  
  - Use the NDOR-HSO air buy budget to publicize the CIOT seat belt mobilizations with a law enforcement message about the presence of increased seat belt enforcement.
  - Ensure that the advertising precedes and runs concurrent with the increased enforcement.
  - Ensure that the advertising clearly communicates the existence of increased enforcement and resonates with the target audience. Alternatively, use National Highway Traffic Safety Administration advertising that carries a law enforcement message (more than just the CIOT slogan).
  
- Use focus groups or intercept surveys to test media messages that are used in conjunction with air buy purchases to ensure that they communicate the intended message and are easily understood.

- Develop a traffic safety communications plan with involvement by key stakeholders and their agency public information officers which incorporates year-round messaging that targets high-risk populations. Include participation in national campaigns, the strategic placement of paid media in support of enforcement efforts, and list educational tools that partners can use to participate in each campaign.

- Provide traffic safety grantees, stakeholders, and members of the child passenger safety community with media and social media training so they can use their many events and activities as a platform for obtaining positive and more comprehensive traffic safety press coverage. Consider using webinars as a low cost method of reaching advocates.

V. OCCUPANT PROTECTION FOR CHILDREN

- Analyze the locations of child passenger safety technicians, technician instructors, and inspection stations to identify populations and locations that are underserved and address these needs.

- Develop and implement strategies to increase awareness and use of neighboring inspection stations and distribution programs among rural residents not currently served.
KEY RECOMMENDATIONS (continued)

V. OCCUPANT PROTECTION FOR CHILDREN (continued)

- Develop a basic child passenger safety (CPS) training presentation for law enforcement that can be offered at roll call or in-service trainings. The presentation should provide visual cues to identify misuse (“If it looks wrong, it most likely is!”). Additionally:
  - Develop an informational law card that contains a pictorial guide for CPS best practice and a synopsis of the child restraint law;
  - Include CPS workshops at all law enforcement summits; and
  - Encourage the inclusion of CPS correct use information as part of the crash reconstruction training and CPS certification training to enhance crash reconstruction investigations.

- Develop and implement an educational program for Nebraska’s hospitals. Conduct a survey to determine if they have:
  - Written child passenger safety discharge policies and protocols;
  - Standardized training for hospital staff; and
  - Educational materials and services providing best practice recommendations for new parents.

VI. OUTREACH PROGRAM

- Sponsor a yearly traffic safety awards program to honor people and programs that excel in achieving occupant protection objectives. Consider consolidating with the awards program undertaken by law enforcement and Mothers Against Drunk Driving.

- Work with stakeholder groups and grantees to develop and implement a comprehensive occupant protection education and outreach plan. List opportunities for year-round earned media coverage, and list educational materials available for stakeholders, as well as where to go and whom to contact to obtain them.

- Engage decision-makers, including elected officials, to participate in occupant protection activities and media events.

VII. DATA AND EVALUATION

- Develop a simple online query system that will allow local highway safety partners and other interested parties to access crash data. The database can be sanitized to remove personal identifying information and location information.
KEY RECOMMENDATIONS (continued)

VII. DATA AND EVALUATION (continued)

- Complete the development of a centralized, statewide citation database. Use this information in conjunction with crash data to support future planning for all traffic enforcement activities.

- Remove the requirement for the completion of a separate driver report in addition to the investigation report. Alternatively, limit the requirement for submission of the form to crashes where weather or other circumstances prevent law enforcement from responding to the scene.
1. PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

GUIDELINE:

Each state should have centralized program planning, implementation and coordination to achieve and sustain high rates of seat belt use. Evaluation is also important for determining progress and ultimate success of occupant protection programs.

- Provide leadership, training and technical assistance to other State agencies and local occupant protection programs and projects;
- Establish and convene an occupant protection advisory task force or coalition to organize and generate broad-based support for programs. The coalition should include agencies and organizations that are representative of the State’s demographic composition and critical to the implementation of occupant protection initiatives;
- Integrate occupant protection programs into community/corridor traffic safety and other injury prevention programs; and
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the State’s occupant protection program.

1A. STRENGTHS

Organization and Staffing

- The Nebraska Highway Safety Office (HSO) resides within the Nebraska Department of Roads (NDOR). Of NDOR’s eight strategic goals, safety is the number one priority.

- NDOR-HSO functions as a section under the Deputy Director-Engineering, along with the Accident Records Section. NDOR-HSO and Accident Records enjoy close cooperation and information sharing.

- As of September 2016, the State has a designated Occupant Protection Coordinator. This position has written and specific responsibilities which include to “develop and implement a comprehensive and coordinated plan specifically for occupant protection.”

Occupant Protection Use

- Seat belt use for observed drivers and front seat passengers increased by 3.7 percentage points from 79.6 in 2015 to 83.3 in 2016, exceeding the 2016 seat belt target of 81.1 percent. (See Graph 1)
Graph 1: Observed Driver and Front Seat Passenger Seat Belt Use

The child restraint use for children under age six increased by 1.5 percentage points from 96.9 percent in 2015 to 98.4 percent in 2016.

Planning and Budgeting

- The current *Nebraska Strategic Highway Safety Plan: Guidance for 2012 – 2016* (NSHSP), completed in 2012, was developed under the auspices of the Nebraska Interagency Safety Committee (IASC), whose member agencies include NDOR, Nebraska State Patrol (NSP), Nebraska Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), Nebraska Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS), Nebraska Local Technical Assistance Program, League of Nebraska Municipalities, and the Nebraska Association of County Officials.

- The NSHSP was originally developed in 2006 and updated for 2012 – 2016. The update from the 2012 – 2016 version has been completed but, at the time of this assessment, was not yet available for general dissemination.

- The Strategic Highway Safety Plan Leadership Group provides oversight, policy direction, and decision-making for Nebraska’s traffic safety efforts, including the occupant protection program. This group consists of four cabinet level positions appointed by the Governor:
  - Director/State Engineer for NDOR,
  - Director of the DMV,
  - Superintendent of the NSP, and
  - DHHS administrative officials.
• The NSHSP has continued to identify an increase in occupant protection as a priority goal with a comprehensive set of strategies to reach this goal. These strategies include:
  o Partner with private companies through websites and social media entities
  o Increase earned media
  o Expand public service announcements to reach larger demographics and other driver behaviors
  o Peer-to-peer education (social media) for at risk populations
  o Consistent enforcement throughout the State
  o Pass a primary seat belt law
  o Increase the number of companies with workplace policies
  o Increase youth incentive programs
  o Increase social media
  o Expand activities and information outreach to youth groups

• According to the FY 2017 Performance-based Strategic Traffic Safety Plan, Nebraska has allocated over $1.2 million in federal grant funds in support of the State’s occupant protection program as shown in the following table.

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Source: FY 2017 Performance-based Strategic Traffic Safety Plan
Through data analysis, NDOR-HSO has identified teen drivers, rural and urban pickup truck drivers, Hispanic population, and children as “at risk” populations for occupant protection efforts.

To match projects and funding with priority geographic areas, NDOR-HSO annually identifies priority counties based on crash rates determined by five years of crash data and seat belt use. A sufficient number of counties are designated as priority to ensure at least 80 percent of the State’s population resides within the priority counties.

Coordination and Implementation

Nebraska has the advantage of several effective state-level coordination groups to assist in planning and implementing successful occupant protection projects. These include, for example:

- Drive Smart Nebraska – An ad hoc task force established to increase seat belt use and to secure the resources necessary to accomplish that goal. Drive Smart Nebraska consists of representatives from statewide organizations, agencies, and businesses. The group is made up of many key public health-related organizations and agencies which provide excellent opportunities to promote seat belt use through their work. Drive Smart Nebraska is the designated task force to support the occupant protection program.
- “Click It - Don’t Risk It” Coalition – An organization of businesses and individuals. Outreach is accomplished through community organizations, schools, and employers. Public recognition of high seat belt use rates are one of the group’s ongoing efforts with awards presented monthly by the Governor.
- The Nebraska Safety Council and the National Safety Council, Nebraska – These Councils support seat belt use through employer-based education, employee policies, and health benefits of seat belt use by family members, plus community outreach to support law enforcement.

- Grant Contract Proposal Guide and Policies and Procedures, a comprehensive and detailed guide and set of instructions for managing traffic safety grants, has been updated and reissued for Fiscal Year 2018. Sample grant documents are also included in this guide.

- In order for the State to qualify for federal Section 405b funds, NDOR-HSO completes a comprehensive occupant protection plan that incorporates law enforcement, public information and education, community outreach, child passenger safety, and opinion and observational surveys.

- NDOR-HSO uses an efficient mini-grant system that encourages small communities to participate in occupant protection projects. This system is particularly effective in
encouraging small police departments to participate in *Click It or Ticket* mobilizations. Reducing child passenger safety mini-grants from $5,000 to $3,000 has also enabled an increase in the number of these grants.

- Annually, NDOR-HSO completes a *Highway Safety Plan Annual Report*. This report is comprehensive and detailed and provides a thorough overview of Nebraska’s use of highway safety funds.

- Some local and regional health departments include questions about use of seat belts and child restraints on community health surveys. These surveys are the first step in completing a community health needs assessment and implementing a health improvement plan.

**1B. CHALLENGES**

- Traffic fatalities increased by 9.3 percent (225 in 2014 to 246 in 2015) and the traffic fatality rate also increased from 1.15 in 2014 to 1.22 in 2015 per 100 million vehicle miles traveled.

- Unrestrained passenger vehicle occupant fatalities in all seating positions increased by 19.5 percent from the 2009 - 2013 calendar base year average of 95 to 118 in 2015. (See Graph 2 below.)

Graph 2: Unrestrained Passenger Vehicle Occupant Fatalities (All Seating Positions)

Source: Fatal Analysis Reporting System (FARS) *Nebraska 2016 Highway Safety Plan Annual Report*
The targeted goal for statewide observed seat belt use of front seat occupants has been reduced from 86.2 percent by December 31, 2014 to 81.1 percent by December 31, 2017. While likely more realistic, reducing the goal is contrary to the philosophy of “Toward Zero Deaths,” a national focus on achieving zero fatalities.

NDOR, as a state transportation agency, focuses primarily on the planning, construction, and maintenance of the roadway system in Nebraska. Behavioral traffic safety programs, therefore, may not be receiving some of the advantages (e.g., local planning and interaction with local officials) of the large and powerful agency with statewide recognition and impact.

As described in Nebraska’s Performance-based Strategic Traffic Safety Plan (aka Highway Safety Plan [HSP]), there appears to be a planning gap between the identification and selection of high priority counties, and the allocation of funds for occupant protection. For example, the NSP allocates funds equally among its six patrol areas regardless of significant differences in geographic size, population, or belt use. Project selection methodology is also unclear as to whether any designated priority county has equal priority with low-belt-use counties to receive occupant protection grant funds.

Problem identification for the HSP remains primarily at the state and county level. Analyses are not conducted at the community level to help determine priority areas. In addition, problem identification does not appear to take advantage of data from sources outside of NDOR or the Crash Outcome Data Evaluation System (CODES) to better pinpoint audiences and areas on which to focus occupant protection efforts.

The number of child passenger safety (CPS) citations is recorded, but CPS citations have not reached the level of an “activity measure” for purposes of the HSP. This may inadvertently communicate that CPS enforcement is not a priority.

State travel restrictions may severely hamper highway safety staff and grantee personnel from taking advantage of training, coordination, and networking opportunities.

Because highway grantee organizations are often the same over several years, there is little investment in training grantees in traffic safety grant management.

Individuals in positions critical to occupant protection efforts and with decades of institutional knowledge are retiring or near retirement. A significant void in leadership could be experienced in the near future.

An e-grants system for traffic safety has not been approved for implementation. E-grants must compete with many other technology projects considered higher priority.

By federal law, the ability to award federal Section 163 funds for behavioral safety programs has been eliminated. Because of this the total amount of federal funds available for occupant protection has been significantly reduced.
• Outside of NDOR-HSO, there is no single, visible champion for occupant protection who has influential access to the highest levels of state and local government, business, and constituent organizations.

• The content of local community health surveys are developed and implemented by local health departments. Whether these surveys include occupant protection questions depends on the priorities of the communities. It is not known if all community health surveys incorporate occupant protection-related questions.

• The use of crash report data for seat belt use when selecting priority counties has a number of inherent flaws. These include, but are not limited to, inconsistency in reporting among counties and the tendency toward inaccurate reporting of seat belt use on crash reports.

1C. RECOMMENDATIONS

• Incorporate additional data sources and conduct more in-depth analyses of the data to better target populations and areas of the State where occupant protection funding could be most effective.

• Set ambitious goals for occupant protection that are achievable but are also motivational and that can support a philosophy of zero traffic deaths (“Toward Zero Deaths”).

• Incorporate Nebraska Department of Roads employees in traffic safety activities and request the help of partner American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials to help generate a more positive impression and better understanding of the highway safety program.

• Analyze the potential of implementing segments of an e-grants system for specific project areas, such as an online system for the collection of Click It or Ticket mobilization enforcement data.

• Add child passenger safety citations as an “activity measure” in Nebraska’s Performance-based Strategic Traffic Safety Plan.

• Use electronic audio and visual tools, such as webinars, teleconferencing, Skype™, and GoToMeeting™, to enable participation of traffic safety personnel across the State in training, meetings, and conferences.

• Implement an annual training opportunity for traffic safety subgrantees focusing on highlights of priority and problem areas for all attendees plus overall grant management requirements for new personnel; use this opportunity to share best practices in problem identification, planning, and implementation of occupant protection projects.
- Plan for and implement tasks, such as development of “how to” notebooks, to ease the transition from current personnel to new leadership.

- Actively search for and select a champion who has the capacity to advocate for occupant protection among the highest levels of influence in the State.

- Incorporate occupant protection questions in community health surveys to encourage the inclusion of action items for occupant protection in local health improvement plans.

- Consider using potentially more reliable and accurate alternatives to crash-reported seat belt use to identify priority counties for occupant protection efforts.
2. LEGISLATION, REGULATION, AND POLICY

GUIDELINE:

Each state should enact and vigorously enforce primary enforcement occupant protection use laws. Each state should develop public information programs to provide clear guidance to the motoring public concerning motor vehicle occupant protection systems. This legal framework should include:

- Legislation permitting primary enforcement that requires all motor vehicle occupants to use systems provided by the vehicle manufacturer;
- Legislation permitting primary enforcement that requires that children birth to 16 years old (or the State’s driving age) be properly restrained in an appropriate child restraint system (i.e., certified by the manufacturer to meet all applicable Federal safety standards) or seat belt;
- Legislation permitting primary enforcement that requires children under 13 years old to be properly restrained in the rear seat (unless all available rear seats are occupied by younger children);
- Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) laws that include three stages of licensure, and that place restrictions and sanctions on high-risk driving situations for novice drivers (i.e., nighttime driving restrictions, passenger restrictions, zero tolerance, required seat belt use);
- Regulations requiring employees and contractors at all levels of government to wear seat belts when traveling on official business;
- Official policies requiring that organizations receiving Federal highway safety program grant funds develop and enforce an employee seat belt use policy; and
- Outreach to state insurance commissioners to encourage them to persuade insurers to offer incentives to policyholders who use seat belts and child restraints. Insurance commissioners are likely to have significant influence with insurers that write policies in their states.

2A. STRENGTHS

- A dedicated group of committed individuals continues to work on upgrades to Nebraska’s occupant protection laws. These individuals have committed significant time and effort over several years on activities in support of legislative changes. These activities have included legislative testimony, articles and editorials, legislative luncheons, personal meetings and contacts, newsletters, and endorsements.

- Nebraska was among the first states in the nation to pass a seat belt law.

- Nebraska Revised Statute (Neb. Rev. Stat.) 60-6,270 requires every driver and front seat passenger to properly use an occupant protection system.
There are few exemptions to Nebraska’s seat belt law, allowing only for the following:

- medical reasons,
- rural letter carriers during the course of their duty,
- emergency medical service personnel involved in patient care, and
- passengers up to age 18 in parades operated according to state and local requirements.

Evidence of a plaintiff’s failure to wear a seat belt may be introduced for mitigation of damages up to five percent if a causal connection between failure to wear an available seat belt and the damages sustained is demonstrated.

Children up to the age of six are required to be restrained in an approved and correctly installed child passenger safety system. (Neb. Rev. Stat. 60-6,267)

Passengers between the ages of six and 18 must be properly restrained in an occupant protection system. (Neb. Rev. Stat. 60-6,268)

According to the *Nebraska Annual Traffic Safety Study (NATSS) 2016*, for the seventh straight year, a majority of respondents (57 percent) indicated that law enforcement officers should be allowed to stop drivers and ticket them for not wearing a seat belt as a primary offense.

*NATSS 2016* respondents were asked what level of fine would be most effective to get people to wear their seat belt all the time. Thirty percent indicated $25-50. The remaining 70 percent indicated more than $50 (26 percent for $51-100, 15 percent for $101-150, 6 percent for $151-200, and 23 percent for more than $200).

According to the *Grant Contract Proposal Guide and Policies and Procedures Federal Fiscal Year 2018*, the Nebraska Department of Roads Highway Safety Office (NDOR-HSO) requires contractors and their staff to “carry a valid vehicle operator’s license, the required liability insurance, maintain good driving records, and utilize safety belts.”

All federally-funded traffic safety grant contractors and/or their agents must have in effect an approved seat belt use policy for all employees and staff. The policy must be actively enforced, and NDOR-HSO requires that an official copy of this policy be provided with a grant contract proposal.

Nebraska state employees must use seat belts in a state or personal vehicle, front or back seat, while on state business. Failure to do so can result in disciplinary action. (*Human Resources Policies and Procedures Manual*, Section 3.12.07)

Primary enforcement of the seat belt law is permitted if there is a traffic violation involving a person under the age of 18 years riding in or on any portion of the vehicle not designed or intended for the use of passengers when the vehicle is in motion. (Neb. Rev. Stat. 60-6,268)
• Under sections of Nebraska’s provisional driver license law:
  
  o All persons being transported by a motor vehicle operated by a holder of a provisional operator’s permit or a school permit shall use an occupant protection system. (Neb. Rev. Stat. 60-6,267)
  o The holder of a provisional operator’s permit may not drive unsupervised between midnight and 6:00 a.m. unless driving to or from a school activity, employment, or residence. (Neb. Rev. Stat. 60-4,120.01)

• Several proposed bills that could enhance occupant protection in the State have been proposed in the current legislative session. These include:
  
  o LB 42 which would
    ▪ increase the requirement for a child to use a properly-installed child restraint system up to the age of six to up to the age of eight
    ▪ require children up to the age of eight to occupy the rear seat of a vehicle
    ▪ require children up to the age of two to use a rear-facing child restraint until the child outgrows the weight and height restrictions of the restraint system.
  o LB 279 which would require new school buses purchased after January 1, 2017 to have lap-shoulder seat belts installed and would require the correct use of these by all passengers, including education in proper use.

• Working with wellness committees and wellness and employee safety programs, health and safety organizations encourage development and implementation of employee seat belt policies.

• The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services provides assistance for hospitals in the development and implementation of a discharge policy to help ensure safe transportation of children upon their release from the hospital.

2B. CHALLENGES

• The political will to strengthen Nebraska’s occupant protection laws does not exist at the highest levels of government nor among State legislators.

• Despite public support for a primary belt law evidenced in the annual driver opinion survey, there is strong anti-government sentiment toward legislation. This sentiment has reached the extent that, for the 2017 legislative session, none of the proposed legislative upgrades for occupant protection are expected to pass, and the existing motorcycle helmet law narrowly avoided repeal.
• Nebraska law does not allow law enforcement to make a primary stop for failure to be properly restrained by an occupant protection system for passengers age six and above. (Neb. Rev. Stat. 60-6,271)

• Several restrictions written specifically into Nebraska law (Neb. Rev. Stat. 60-6,272) prohibit certain penalties for a seat belt violation. These include:
  o Court costs cannot be levied.
  o No points can be assessed against the driver license.
  o Only one violation can be assessed against the driver regardless of the number of persons not using an occupant protection system.

• Primary enforcement of any violation of Nebraska’s graduated driver licensing law (GDL) is not permitted.

• For teen drivers, under GDL there is no impact on the driver license for violation of the seat belt law. There is no extension of the time required to hold a permit or provisional license for a violation.

• There seems to be a general understanding that law enforcement officers are legally exempt from using a seat belt. There does not appear to be any provision in legislation that allows this exemption.

• There is indication that some prosecutors drop the secondary seat belt violation when the primary offense is waived, even though the seat belt law only requires that the driver be “cited or charged” for the primary offense.

• No information was available for the assessment regarding laws or policies of the Native American Tribes in Nebraska.

• Though agriculture is a major economic and political factor in Nebraska, agricultural and business organizations (e.g., Nebraska Farm Bureau, Tyson Foods) have not yet been included in occupant protection legislative efforts. An agricultural safety council is under development that has a broad interest in many areas of agriculture safety and may eventually participate in and assist with traffic safety and occupant protection efforts.

• A seat belt or child restraint violation may be dismissed upon completion of an approved driver safety course. It has been several years since there has been an evaluation of the impact of this type of program on occupant protection use.

• The extent to which hospitals have and implement a discharge policy regarding safe child transportation varies across the State.

• The extent to which Nebraska employers have and implement a seat belt policy for their employees is unknown.
• The extent to which Nebraska schools have and implement a seat belt policy for students, faculty, and staff is unknown.

• State regulation governing the content for driver education curriculum for schools that offer classes to anyone applying for a permit are very broad in scope. (Title 247, Chapter 11, Section 10, “Rules and Regulations Governing Department of Motor Vehicles Approval of Driver Safety Courses.”) Although “occupant protection” is a subject matter area that “must be presented in depth,” there are no additional guidelines for this or any other subject matter area in the curriculum.

2C. RECOMMENDATIONS

• Allow primary enforcement for violating Nebraska’s seat belt law.

• Increase the age at which children must be correctly restrained in an approved and appropriate child restraint to eight years old.

• Require proper use of occupant protection for all ages in all seating positions of a moving vehicle.

• Increase the fine for failure to use a seat belt or appropriate child restraint to an amount that the majority of Nebraskans would consider effective.

• Eliminate restrictions on penalties for an occupant protection law violation such that:
  o Court costs can be added to a fine for violation of occupant protection law if the basic fine cannot be increased.
  o A police officer has the discretion to issue multiple citations to a driver if there are more than one occupant protection law violations in the vehicle.
  o Points can be assessed against the driver’s license for occupant protection violations.

• Allow primary enforcement for any violation of graduated driver licensing provisions.

• Continue to implement various strategies and add politically potent partners, such as agriculture-related businesses and associations, to build a strong constituency for enhancing Nebraska occupant protection law.

• Coordinate with Nebraska’s Native American Tribes to determine the extent of their laws and identify potential for enhancement and coordination.

• Ensure those responsible for enforcement and prosecution of occupant protection laws are well-versed in the specifics of State statutes.
- Evaluate educational programs that allow for occupant protection ticket dismissal to determine their impact on seat belt and child restraint use.

- Determine and increase the number of hospitals that have and implement discharge policies for children to be safely transported upon leaving the hospital.

- Determine and increase the number of schools that have and implement a seat belt policy for students, faculty, and staff.

- Determine and increase the number of businesses that have and implement a seat belt policy for all employees, drivers, and passengers, on company business in a personal or company vehicle.

- Provide more detailed guidance for what a driver education curriculum needs to address for occupant protection as a subject matter area.
3. LAW ENFORCEMENT

GUIDELINE:

Each State should conduct frequent, high-visibility law enforcement efforts, coupled with communication strategies, to increase seat belt and child safety seat use. Essential components of a law enforcement program should include:

- Written, enforced seat belt use policies for law enforcement agencies with sanctions for noncompliance to protect law enforcement officers from harm and for officers to serve as role models for the motoring public;
- Vigorous enforcement of seat belt and child safety seat laws, including citations and warnings;
- Accurate reporting of occupant protection system information on police accident report forms, including seat belt and child safety seat use or non-use, restraint type, and airbag presence and deployment;
- Communication campaigns to inform the public about occupant protection laws and related enforcement activities;
- Routine monitoring of citation rates for non-use of seat belts and child safety seats;
- Use of National Child Passenger Safety Certification (basic and in-service) for law enforcement officers;
- Utilization of Law Enforcement Liaisons (LELs), for activities such as promotion of national and local mobilizations and increasing law enforcement participation in such mobilizations and collaboration with local chapters of police groups and associations that represent diverse groups (e.g., NOBLE, HAPCOA) to gain support for enforcement efforts.

3A. STRENGTHS

- The Nebraska Department of Roads Highway Safety Office (NDOR-HSO) promotes and provides grant funding for two statewide high-visibility occupant protection enforcement mobilizations: the national Click it or Ticket (CIOT) mobilization in May and a statewide CIOT mobilization during November.

- NDOR-HSO uses an efficient mini-grant system that encourages small communities to participate in occupant protection projects. This system is particularly effective in encouraging small police departments to participate in CIOT mobilizations.

- Occupant protection is a priority for the Nebraska State Patrol (NSP). During the May and November CIOT mobilizations in 2015 and 2016, NSP troopers made over 51 percent of all enforcement contacts reported to NDOR-HSO.

- Nebraska’s four law enforcement training academies (the Nebraska Law Enforcement Training Center [NLETC], NSP, the Omaha Public Safety Training Center, and the Lincoln Police Department Academy) educate law enforcement recruits on the importance of enforcing seat belt and child restraint use laws.
The NLETC encourages seat belt use by law enforcement officers to become habitual by requiring each student to always buckle up whenever operating any vehicle. Additionally, the use of seat belts is an evaluation component of recruit training when working with a Field Training Officer (FTO). This helps promote seat belt use by both the trainee and the FTO.

NDOR-HSO requires all grantees, including law enforcement, to have a written policy requiring all employees to use seat belts. A copy of that policy must be provided to NDOR-HSO with the grant application.

Law enforcement officers account for 7.4 percent of the State’s child passenger safety technicians (CPST). NSP troopers account for 41 percent of all law enforcement CPSTs.

Information about Nebraska law is readily available for law enforcement officers to share with drivers whose children are unrestrained. Officers are able to refer citizens to inspection stations and to where they may be able to acquire a free child safety seat, if necessary.

Law enforcement grantees of NDOR-HSO are required to issue press releases before and after each high-visibility occupant protection enforcement mobilization.

About 76 percent of law enforcement agencies in Nebraska issue electronic citations for traffic violations.

Ninety percent of crash reports are filed electronically, permitting much faster access to crash data.

Law enforcement agencies use a data-driven approach for deploying manpower to address highway safety concerns. Several use the Data-Driven Approach to Crime and Traffic Safety (DDACTS) to impact both crime and traffic safety in their communities.

NDOR-HSO analyzes past performance of law enforcement grantees when evaluating future funding allocations to help ensure funding is directed to where it will be used most effectively.

Large, well-staffed law enforcement agencies incorporate occupant protection enforcement into other traffic safety initiatives, such as sobriety and safety checkpoints.

Significant nighttime occupant protection enforcement is required of all grantees during high-visibility occupant protection enforcement mobilizations.

NDOR-HSO has established a desired level of driver contacts by law enforcement agencies working grant-funded occupant protection enforcement.
3B. CHALLENGES

- Seat belt use may only be enforced as a secondary offense, preventing enforcement action for an observed violation. On occasion, this also affects the outcome of occupant protection charges when the initial violation is dismissed prior to a court hearing.

- While all grantees are required to have a mandatory seat belt use policy in order to receive funds from NDOR-HSO, it does not appear that agencies consistently monitor seat belt use or if there are penalties when an employee violates the policy.

- Although some law enforcement agencies provide roll call style training to officers on the benefits of using seat belts and of enforcing occupant restraint laws, the practice is not widespread.

- There is no means by which to determine the level of occupant protection enforcement efforts that are not grant-funded. This impedes the ability to verify consistent year-round enforcement.

- While electronic citation capability exists for a growing number of law enforcement officers, information from those systems is not compatible for sharing across all platforms. A law enforcement officer with one agency cannot determine, while on a traffic stop, if the driver had previously been stopped by a different agency and issued a citation or warning for a similar infraction.

- NDOR-HSO does not have a Law Enforcement Liaison program.

- The State of Nebraska Investigator’s Motor Vehicle Accident Report is not compliant with the current Model Minimum Uniform Crash Criteria and lacks coding for whether a particular safety restraint was being properly used at the time of the crash.

- Statewide grant-funded seat belt enforcement activity has decreased by 56.4 percent over the last five years.

Source: Nebraska 2016 Highway Safety Annual Report
• About seven in 10 vehicle occupants killed in crashes in Nebraska were not using seat belts. The vast majority of unrestrained fatalities occur on local rural roads where law enforcement resources are minimal.

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Source: Nebraska Strategic Highway Safety Plan Guidance for 2012-2016

• Duplication exists in the filing of vehicle crash reports to the Nebraska Department of Roads (NDOR). Nebraska Revised Statute Chapter 60 Section 699 requires a vehicle operator or owner to file a crash report with NDOR regardless of whether a police report was filed or not. Citizen crash reports and police crash reports of the same incident may contain conflicting information. Although there are about 35,000 reportable crashes per year, NDOR handles over 75,000 crash reports and must sort through these reports to prevent duplicate data entry.

• Although a large and growing percentage of crash reports are being filed electronically, there is no uniform data platform among agencies submitting electronic crash reports. Entry of crash GPS location is also inconsistent among the various entities thus requiring additional data quality control on the part of NDOR personnel and a delay in the availability of crash data for use in directing law enforcement personnel.

• While large law enforcement agencies can use in-house data in addition to data made available by NDOR, smaller agencies with fewer resources are often limited to using only NDOR-provided data to direct their personnel.

• Nebraska statutes stipulate different conditions for enforcement of child restraint violations for children up to age six and those ages six to 18. It is a primary offense to have a child under six unrestrained or improperly restrained whereas it is a secondary offense to have a child between the ages of six and 18 improperly restrained or unrestrained. It can be difficult for a law enforcement officer to determine, based on observation alone, a young child’s age.

• There is no statewide awards program for law enforcement officers to recognize those who excel in areas of occupant protection enforcement, innovative programs, or public education.
Law enforcement agencies do not seem to provide a great deal of information about unrestrained injuries or deaths unless required to during high-visibility occupant protection enforcement mobilizations.

3C. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Allow primary enforcement for violating Nebraska’s seat belt law.

- Establish a Law Enforcement Liaison (LEL) program. The position(s) should be staffed by current or former law enforcement personnel who have the ability to garner the support of law enforcement executives to work toward the highway safety goals of the Nebraska Department of Roads Highway Safety Office. The LELs should also be able to coordinate and facilitate training programs to better inform the law enforcement community about highway safety concerns, practices, and procedures.

- Modify the language of Nebraska Revised Statute Chapter 60 Section 699 related to the filing of crash reports, eliminating the requirement for operators or owners of vehicles involved in crashes to file a crash report if such a report has already been made to a law enforcement agency and a crash report was completed.

- Update the State of Nebraska Investigator’s Motor Vehicle Accident Report to ensure Model Minimum Uniform Crash Criteria compliance.

- Collect total (grant- and non-grant-funded) year-round occupant protection enforcement citation and warning data from law enforcement grantees.

- Encourage law enforcement agencies to include occupant protection crash and fatality information on their websites and/or other signage.

- Provide annual awards for law enforcement officers who excel in occupant protection enforcement, innovative programs, or public education.

- Encourage all law enforcement agencies in the State to increase occupant protection enforcement both throughout the year and during high-visibility enforcement mobilizations.

- Specify a minimum number of non-overtime matching enforcement hours a law enforcement grantee must dedicate for each hour of occupant protection overtime claimed.

- Implement a method to identify and report unrestrained law enforcement officers.
4. COMMUNICATION

GUIDELINE:

As part of each State’s communication program, the State should enlist the support of a variety of media, including mass media, to improve public awareness and knowledge and to support enforcement efforts to about seat belts, air bags, and child safety seats. To sustain or increase rates of seat belt and child safety seat use, a well-organized effectively managed communication program should:

- Identify specific audiences (e.g., low belt use, high-risk motorists) and develop messages appropriate for these audiences;
- Address the enforcement of the State’s seat belt and child passenger safety laws; the safety benefits of regular, correct seat belt (both manual and automatic) and child safety seat use; and the additional protection provided by air bags;
- Continue programs and activities to increase the use of booster seats by children who have outgrown their toddler seats but who are still too small to safely use the adult seat belts;
- Capitalize on special events, such as nationally recognized safety and injury prevention weeks and local enforcement campaigns;
- Provide materials and media campaigns in more than one language as necessary;
- Use national themes and materials;
- Participate in national programs to increase seat belt and child safety seat use and use law enforcement as the State’s contribution to obtaining national public awareness through concentrated, simultaneous activity;
- Utilize paid media, as appropriate;
- Publicize seat belt use surveys and other relevant statistics;
- Encourage news media to report seat belt use and non-use in motor vehicle crashes;
- Involve media representatives in planning and disseminating communication campaigns;
- Encourage private sector groups to incorporate seat belt use messages into their media campaigns;
- Utilize and involve all media outlets: television, radio, print, signs, billboards, theaters, sports events, health fairs;
- Evaluate all communication campaign efforts.

4A. STRENGTHS

- The Nebraska Department of Roads Highway Safety Office (NDOR-HSO) gives priority to the expenditure of funds on programs that incorporate research-tested, best practice models. Their Strategic Highway Safety Plan uses traffic safety data to identify key geographical areas and population segments where occupant protection countermeasures may reduce collision deaths and injuries.

- NDOR-HSO data show that from 2015 to 2016, seat belt use increased from 79.6 percent to 83.3 percent and child restraint use increased from 96.9 percent to 98.4 percent. In 2015, youth-related crashes were reduced by 10 percent from the previous five-year
average, despite traffic deaths increasing significantly during this same time period (19 percent).

- NDOR-HSO capitalizes on the availability of electronic message signs located on roads across the State to communicate about seat belt mobilizations and other important traffic safety projects.

- NDOR-HSO has a number of planning and stakeholder groups and employs numerous methods of engaging a wide range of partner organizations in their seat belt and child passenger safety promotional efforts. For example, the Governor’s Office, the Nebraska State Patrol, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Motor Vehicles, the Department of Roads, and others are involved when conducting kick off events to publicize seat belt mobilizations.

- NDOR-HSO uses a number of methods to encourage grantees to publicize their traffic safety efforts, including making this a condition of their grants and encouraging them to promote traffic safety in their agency newsletters, on their websites, and other social media sites.

- NDOR-HSO is a recognized and reputable authority in Nebraska on traffic safety issues, a go-to source for the news media and legislature.

- Media consumption patterns of young male unrestrained motorists have changed dramatically in recent years and, being responsive to these developments, NDOR-HSO and their grant-funded programs employ social media, YouTube, Twitter, Vimeo, Facebook, and web media placements to reach this target demographic, along with the more traditional marketing venues.

- NDOR-HSO public opinion research shows that 57 percent of Nebraskans believe law enforcement should be able to pull over an unrestrained motorist, indicating a majority of people support the adoption of a primary seat belt law.

- The Nebraska Interagency Safety Committee, formed in 2004, involves state, local, and federal traffic safety advocates in the development and oversight of the Nebraska Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP). A subset of this committee, called the Working Committee, provides monthly guidance to the Executive Committee on plan implementation. A key strategy of the SHSP calls for enhanced public education to groups with lower than average restraint use rates.

- NDOR-HSO emphasizes the importance of nighttime seat belt enforcement, requiring law enforcement grantees to conduct at least 50 percent of their patrols during evening hours as a condition of their grant. Law enforcement agencies are also required to issue press releases before and after their patrols and to conduct pre- and post-observational surveys to measure the impact of their efforts.
• The Nebraska State Patrol encourages citizens to visit their website to find out exactly where enforcement patrols are taking place, increasing message exposure about enforcement mobilizations. This helps dispel citizen concerns that seat belt enforcement mobilizations might be about generating revenue, rather than the true reason of saving lives and reducing collision injuries.

• The Drive Smart Nebraska project, grant-funded by NDOR-HSO, conducted an extensive outreach campaign that included social media posts, theater, newspaper and television advertisements, and mobile billboards. They tested their media message to ensure that it resonates with the target audience and achieves the desired traffic safety objective.

4B. CHALLENGES

• The Click It or Ticket (CIOT) program model uses a combination of seat belt focused law enforcement patrols, an aggressive earned and paid media communications effort that takes place before and during the patrols, and the use of an enforcement message that communicates the existence of increased enforcement efforts. NDOR-HSO ads do not provide a clear message about increased enforcement.

• Most (60 percent) of NDOR-HSO seat belt focused advertising takes place in sports venues at times that do not coincide with the CIOT mobilization dates. Hence, about $200,000 in yearly advertising does not follow the research-tested, best practice CIOT program model.

• Roadside billboards and banners on trucks can reach motorists when they are in their vehicles, but these media with too much information are difficult for motorists to read.

• Public opinion research conducted in May 2016 shows that a large percentage of State respondents do not believe that they will get a ticket if they are not buckled up. When asked: “What are the chances of getting a ticket if you are not buckled?” 60 percent said either very unlikely or somewhat unlikely. Only 40 percent responded that it would be likely, somewhat likely, or very likely that they would get a ticket if riding unrestrained.

• Public opinion research findings (May 2016) show that a low percentage (28 percent) of State respondents said they had seen or heard about increased seat belt enforcement within the last 60 days. Because this survey is completed prior to the CIOT mobilization, it may not accurately reflect the impact of the campaign on public perception.

• NDOR-HSO uses a staff assistant to clip newspaper articles and monitor media coverage, a task that might more easily and inexpensively be accomplished by setting up a web-based search.

• NDOR-HSO mailed CIOT mobilization packets with press releases and other print materials to encourage stakeholder participation in the mobilization rather than using a
web-based service which could save money, time, and provide a method of determining if the materials are being used (i.e., downloaded).

- NDOR-HSO lacks a comprehensive communications plan that lists opportunities for year-round earned media coverage, paid media messaging that supports mobilizations, and outreach that focuses on at risk populations (i.e., males ages 18-to-34, diverse populations, tweens, and booster seat age children).

- Many Nebraska citizens who die in traffic crashes would have survived had they been buckled up. Law enforcement and emergency responders at the crash scene do not always emphasize this issue when communicating with the media about crash events.

- Many newsworthy projects are not being shared with the media even though they have the potential to reach citizens with important seat belt and CPS information.

4C. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Strengthen public information in support of Click It or Ticket (CIOT) seat belt mobilizations by the following:
  - Use the NDOR-HSO air buy budget to publicize the CIOT seat belt mobilizations with a law enforcement message about the presence of increased seat belt enforcement.
  - Ensure that the advertising precedes and runs concurrent with the increased enforcement.
  - Ensure that advertising clearly communicates the existence of increased enforcement and resonates with the target audience. Alternatively, use National Highway Traffic Safety Administration advertising that carries a law enforcement message (more than just the CIOT slogan).

- Strive for simplicity when conveying traffic safety messages on billboards and truck banners. For example,
  - Limit the number of words on the billboard to no more than seven,
  - Limit the use of multiple agency logos (or make them very small so that they don’t result in message clutter), and
  - Use simple visuals and/or photographs to convey the message.

- Use focus groups or intercept surveys to test media messages that are used in conjunction with air buy purchases to ensure that they communicate the intended message and are easily understood.

- Consider changing the dates of the NDOR-HSO Public Opinion Survey so that data collection takes place after the May Click it or Ticket mobilization. This way the
research could be used to measure the effectiveness of the mobilization publicity and enforcement.

- Explore the feasibility of setting up a web-based search to obtain copies of local news articles and television coverage of traffic safety issues.

- Consider posting mobilization packets online, instead of mailing packets to stakeholder groups. In addition to saving money, the number of downloads can be measured to determine how many stakeholders access the materials.

- Develop a traffic safety communications plan with involvement by key stakeholders and their agency public information officers which incorporates year-round messaging that targets high-risk populations. Include participation in national campaigns, the strategic placement of paid media in support of enforcement efforts, and list educational tools that partners can use to participate in each campaign.

- Encourage law enforcement executives to communicate with the media about cases where a motorist is severely injured or killed in a crash because they were unrestrained, or, conversely, survives a crash because they were restrained.

- Provide traffic safety grantees, stakeholders, and members of the child passenger safety community with media and social media training so they can use their many events and activities as a platform for obtaining positive and more comprehensive traffic safety press coverage. Consider using webinars as a low cost method of reaching advocates.

- Consider partnering with the Nebraska Broadcasters Association which may be able to provide a large amount of free air time for seat belt messaging with a relatively small expenditure of air buy funds.
5. OCCUPANT PROTECTION FOR CHILDREN

GUIDELINE:

Each State should enact occupant protection laws that require the correct restraint of all children, in all seating positions and in every vehicle. Regulations and policies should exist that provide clear guidance to the motoring public concerning occupant protection for children. Each State should require that children birth to 16 years old (or the State’s driving age) be properly restrained in the appropriate child restraint system or seat belt. Gaps in State child passenger safety and seat belt laws should be closed to ensure that all children are covered in all seating positions, with requirements for age-appropriate child restraint use. Key provisions of the law should include: driver responsibility for ensuring that children are properly restrained; proper restraint of children under 13 years of age in the rear seat (unless all available rear seats are occupied by younger children); a ban of passengers from the cargo areas of light trucks; and a limit on the number of passengers based on the number of available seat belts in the vehicle.

To achieve these objectives, State occupant protection programs for children should:

- Collect and analyze key data elements in order to evaluate the program progress;
- Assure that adequate and accurate training is provided to the professionals who deliver and enforce the occupant protection programs for parents and caregivers;
- Assure that the capability exists to train and retain nationally certified child passenger safety technicians to address attrition of trainers or changing public demographics;
- Promote the use of child restraints and assure that a plan has been developed to provide an adequate number of inspection stations and clinics, which meet minimum quality criteria;
- Maintain a strong law enforcement program that includes vigorous enforcement of the child occupant protection laws;
- Enlist the support of the media to increase public awareness about child occupant protection laws and the use of child restraints. Strong efforts should be made to reach underserved populations;
- Assure that the child occupant protection programs at the local level are periodically assessed and that programs are designed to meet the unique demographic needs of the community;
- Establish the infrastructure to systematically coordinate the array of child occupant protection program components;
- Encourage law enforcement participation in the National Child Passenger Safety Certification (basic and in-service) training for law enforcement officers.

5A. STRENGTHS

- The Nebraska child restraint law (60-6,267) is primary enforcement and requires all children up to six years of age to be secured in a correctly installed child restraint system.

- Nebraska has an active Child Passenger Safety (CPS) program that is coordinated by the Nebraska Department of Roads Highway Safety Office (NDOR-HSO) in partnership with the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Division of Public Health and Nebraska Safe Kids. Many agencies and organizations collaborate to promote
CPS education and provide child restraint and booster seat distribution.

- A CPS Advisory Group, made up of NDOR-HSO, DHHS, and the child passenger safety instructors (CPSTIs), meets three times a year to plan and facilitate CPS certification classes, the annual statewide technical update, and inspection stations to meet individual community needs.

- NDOR-HSO provides grant funding for a minimum of four National Child Passenger Safety Certification Training classes and supports independent CPS classes tailored to a specific population (e.g., nurses at a hospital Neonatal Intensive Care Unit).

- Nebraska has 21 CPSTIs in 12 of the 93 counties providing support to the child passenger safety technicians (CPSTs) in the State.

- NDOR-HSO provides an annual subscription of the Safe Ride News newsletter for CPSTIs to stay current in the field of CPS. In fiscal year (FY) 2016, 18 subscriptions were provided.

- Nebraska has five Technician Proxies who can review and approve seat checks for CPS recertification.

- Nebraska has 367 CPSTs located in 59 out of 93 counties. CPSTs represent various disciplines: hospital/medical (181), law enforcement (27), non-profit (49), public health (28), rescue/EMS (11), Safe Kids (11), school/university (16), vehicle retail (1), other (45) and unknown (18). CPSTs provide access to CPS educational services to approximately 93 percent of the child population from birth through age nine.¹

- Forty-six CPSTs and CPSTIs in 9 counties have attended the “Safe Travel for All Children: Transporting Children with Special Health Care Needs” class. Three of the 46 are authorized to teach the enhancement class.

- NDOR-HSO provides The LATCH Manual to CPSTs at their certification training. The LATCH Manual is also available at the annual technical update for those with an outdated version. In FY 2016, 140 manuals were provided to new CPSTs. In FY 2015, 310 manuals were provided.

- NDOR-HSO supports an annual one-day CPS training for CPSTIs and CPSTs to learn current trends and industry standards, with access to the CPS continuing education units (CEUs) to maintain certification. An opportunity is provided for the hands-on skill check to meet an additional recertification requirement. In FY 2016, 13 CPSTIs and 166 CPSTs attended the annual technical update. Some CPSTs attended the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration Region 7 Midwest Child Passenger Safety Conference.

¹ See Appendix: Table 1: Nebraska – CPS Technicians/Instructors March 2017. Lincoln, Nebraska: Angela Osterhuber
• The 2016 recertification rate for Nebraska CPSTs was 59.2 percent with 113 out of 191 CPSTs completing the recertification requirements. The 2015 recertification rate was 64.2 percent. These recertification rates were above the national average of 56.3 percent in 2016 and 58.4 percent in 2015.

• Nebraska state regulations require child care facility employees who transport children to complete a three- to four-hour Safe Kids child care transportation training. Child care staff must complete the training once every five years. New employees have 90 days and existing employees have one year to complete the training. There are 39 CPSTs approved to teach this class covering approximately 65 of the 93 counties.

• Nebraska has a network of inspection stations to provide education on selecting, installing, and properly securing a child in a child safety seat. There are 20 active child safety seat inspection stations accessible by 55 counties covering 87.88 percent of children from birth to age nine. In addition to the inspections stations, approximately 50 community inspection events are scheduled.

• Most of the Nebraska Inspection Stations use the Safe Kids checklist form. Data are tabulated by the Safe Kids WorldWide national office.

• In FY 2016, eight mini-grants were awarded to purchase 430 child safety seats for distribution through inspection stations serving 24 counties. In FY 2015, a total of 638 child safety seats were purchased through eight mini-grants serving 24 counties. Twelve mini-grants were awarded in FY 2017. Child safety seats are provided to qualifying low income families.

• NDOR-HSO and DHHS support multiple events during National Child Passenger Safety Week (September) and Safe Kids Day (April).

• An annual child restraint observational survey is conducted to establish a baseline for measurement in changes of use and attitudes. In 1999, the child restraint use rate was 56.2 percent. The 2016 observational survey found child restraint use at 98.4 percent.

• An annual traffic safety study is conducted to measure Nebraskans’ attitudes toward various highway safety issues. In 2015, nearly one-fourth of the respondents (24 percent) indicated they have children weighing between 40 and 80 pounds; of those, 71 percent indicated they use a booster seat for their child in the car.

5B. CHALLENGES

• The Nebraska child restraint law (60-6,267) is secondary enforcement for children six years of age up to age 18 and permits exemptions for taxicabs, authorized emergency

2 See Appendix: Table 2: Nebraska – Inspection Stations February 2017. Lincoln, Nebraska: Angela Osterhuber.
vehicles, and vehicles operated in a parade or exhibition. The child restraint law allows for only one citation and penalty even if more than one child, younger than 18 years of age, is unrestrained.

- NDOR-HSO receives monthly reports regarding state-funded CPS educational programs and activity from grantees. It does not appear there is a strategy to obtain non-state-funded activity to ensure there is comprehensive documentation of CPS educational programs and activity implemented throughout the State.

- Analysis of misuse data recorded at inspection stations and community car seat inspections to determine common errors is not conducted.

- Nebraska is largely rural with great distances between communities. This makes it difficult to mentor new CPSTs and support CPS efforts statewide.

- There are 19 counties in Nebraska that do not have easy access to a CPST or an inspection station.

- There does not appear to be a strategy to assess and identify underserved communities to determine an adequate number of CPSTs and inspection stations.

- There does not appear to be a standardized basic CPS training program available for law enforcement officers, who are not CPSTs, on the identification of misuse and enforcement.

- It is unknown if all hospitals in Nebraska have discharge policies that include CPS and/or car seat tolerance testing to inform parents of the State’s child restraint law or best practice recommendations for the safe transportation of children.

- There was no evidence that community-based health care providers (e.g., pediatricians, primary care providers) are fully engaged in CPS promotion (e.g., with information to help counsel families and refer them to a local car seat distribution program and/or a nearby inspection station).

- There does not appear to be standardized CPS training programs available for schools (both teachers and students), school transportation, emergency medical services, or other agencies that interact with and/or transport children.

- While there is a significant effort to address the needs of children who are in child restraints and programs for teen drivers, there are few coordinated and sustained efforts for children ages six to 13.

- There appears to be limited CPS educational flyers and brochures that can be distributed to medical facilities, schools, school transportation, community agencies, and businesses.
5C. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Strengthen the Nebraska child restraint law by removing exemptions and following best practice recommendations (e.g. rear-facing until age two and expanding the law to include all children up to age eight).

- Develop and implement standardized child passenger safety educational presentations and programs for Head Start/preschool, schools, school transportation, medical community (hospitals and physician practices), emergency medical services, etc.

- **Analyze the locations of child passenger safety technicians, technician instructors, and inspection stations to identify populations and locations that are underserved and address these needs.**

- Increase access to recertification requirements by:
  - Increasing opportunities for earning continuing education units.
  - Developing and implementing a strategic plan to offer standardized technical updates throughout the State for technicians (e.g., in-person trainings and/or webinars).
  - Coupling in-person educational trainings with community inspection stations to provide an opportunity for hands-on skill sign-offs.

- Develop and implement an instructor development mentoring program to increase the number of instructors strategically located throughout the State. The mentoring program can assist both new and experienced instructors to maintain and improve technical knowledge and/or teaching skills.

- Recruit experienced technicians throughout the State to become Technician Proxies who can review and approve seat checks for recertification.

- Maintain current statewide inspection stations and increase the number of inspection stations in additional geographic locations as needed.

- Survey child passenger safety instructors and technicians to assess local/county child passenger safety activity. The survey may include, but should not be limited to, collecting information on the following:
  - Educational resources and materials;
  - Educational programs and/or presentations developed and implemented;
  - Participation in community events and/or inspection stations; and
  - Identifying community needs.

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3 See Appendix: Table 1: Nebraska – CPS Technicians/Instructors March 2017. Lincoln, Nebraska: Angela Osterhuber and Table 2: Nebraska – Inspection Stations February 2017. Lincoln, Nebraska: Angela Osterhuber.
• Develop and implement strategies to increase awareness and use of neighboring inspection stations and distribution programs among rural residents not currently served.

• Develop a basic child passenger safety (CPS) training presentation for law enforcement that can be offered at roll call or in-service trainings. The presentation should provide visual cues to identify misuse (“If it looks wrong, it most likely is!”). Additionally:
  o Develop an informational law card that contains a pictorial guide for CPS best practice and a synopsis of the child restraint law;
  o Include CPS workshops at all law enforcement summits; and
  o Encourage the inclusion of CPS correct use information as part of the crash reconstruction training and CPS certification training to enhance crash reconstruction investigations.

• Develop and implement an educational program for Nebraska’s hospitals. Conduct a survey to determine if they have:
  o Written child passenger safety discharge policies and protocols;
  o Standardized training for hospital staff; and
  o Educational materials and services providing best practice recommendations for new parents.


• Develop and implement a child passenger safety presentation that is message-appropriate for physicians, based on the American Academy of Pediatrics “Policy Statement on Child Passenger Safety”. Explore whether a medical continuing medical education/continuing education unit can be obtained for the presentation to entice physicians, medical professionals, and office staff to attend the training. Trainings can be offered at hospital grand rounds, physician practices, or via webinar.

• Develop and launch a coordinated statewide initiative to implement an age-appropriate educational program targeting children from age six to 13 to continue the message of safe transportation for all child passengers.

• Develop Nebraska specific educational materials for different age groups (preschool through adult) that can be distributed during educational programs and community events. Increase the availability of educational materials in diverse communities and expand the use of culturally-sensitive materials that target minority populations.
• Develop and implement a three-to-five year plan with current and potential partners to continue, expand, or develop child passenger safety programs targeting children, teens, and their parents/caregivers.
6. OUTREACH PROGRAM

GUIDELINE:

Each state should encourage extensive statewide and community involvement in occupant protection education by involving individuals and organizations outside the traditional highway safety community. Representation from health, business, education, and diverse cultures of the community are encouraged, among others. Community involvement broadens public support for the state’s programs and can increase a state’s ability to deliver highway safety education programs. To encourage statewide and community involvement, States should:

- Establish a coalition or task force of individuals and organizations to actively promote use of occupant protection systems;
- Create an effective communications network among coalition members to keep members informed about issues;
- Provide culturally relevant materials and resources necessary to conduct occupant protection education programs, especially directed toward young people, in local settings;
- Provide materials and resources necessary to conduct occupant protection education programs, especially directed toward specific cultural or otherwise diverse populations represented in the State and in its political subdivisions.

States should undertake a variety of outreach programs to achieve statewide and community involvement in occupant protection education, as described below. Programs should include outreach to diverse populations, health and medical communities, schools and employers.

a. Diverse Populations

Each State should work closely with individuals and organizations that represent the various ethnic and cultural populations reflected in State demographics. Individuals from these groups might not be reached through traditional communication markets. Community leaders and representatives from the various ethnic and cultural groups and organizations will help States to increase the use of child safety seats and seat belts. The State should:

- Evaluate the need for, and provide, if necessary, materials and resources in multiple languages;
- Collect and analyze data on fatalities and injuries in diverse communities;
- Ensure representation of diverse groups on State occupant protection coalitions and other work groups;
- Provide guidance to grantees on conducting outreach in diverse communities;
- Utilize leaders from diverse communities as spokespeople to promote seat belt use and child safety seat;
- Conduct outreach efforts to diverse organizations and populations during law enforcement mobilization periods.

b. Health and Medical Communities
Each State should integrate occupant protection into health programs. The failure of drivers and passengers to use occupant protection systems is a major public health problem that must be recognized by the medical and health care communities. The SHSO, the State Health Department and other State or local medical organizations should collaborate in developing programs that:

- Integrate occupant protection into professional health training curricula and comprehensive public health planning;
- Promote occupant protection systems as a health promotion/injury prevention measure;
- Require public health and medical personnel to use available motor vehicle occupant protection systems during work hours;
- Provide technical assistance and education about the importance of motor vehicle occupant protection to primary caregivers (e.g., doctors, nurses, clinic staff);
- Include questions about seat belt use in health risk appraisals;
- Utilize health care providers as visible public spokespeople for seat belt and child safety seat use;
- Provide information about the availability of child safety seats at, and integrate child safety seat inspections into, maternity hospitals and other prenatal and natal care centers;
- Collect, analyze and publicize data on additional injuries and medical expenses resulting from non-use of occupant protection devices.

c. Schools

Each State should encourage local school boards and educators to incorporate occupant protection education into school curricula. The SHSO in cooperation with the State Department of Education should:

- Ensure that highway safety and traffic-related injury control, in general, and occupant protection, in particular, are included in the State-approved K-12 health and safety education curricula and textbooks;
- Establish and enforce written policies requiring that school employees use seat belts when operating a motor vehicle on the job; and
- Encourage active promotion of regular seat belt use through classroom and extracurricular activities as well as in school-based health clinics; and
- Work with School Resource Officers (SROs) to promote seat belt use among high school students;
- Establish and enforce written school policies that require students driving to and from school to wear seat belts. Violation of these policies should result in revocation of parking or other campus privileges for a stated period of time.

d. Employers
Each State and local subdivision should encourage all employers to require seat belt use on the job as a condition of employment. Private sector employers should follow the lead of Federal and State government employers and comply with Executive Order 13043, “Increasing Seat Belt Use in the United States” as well as all applicable Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) Regulations or Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations requiring private business employees to use seat belts on the job. All employers should:

- Establish and enforce a seat belt use policy with sanctions for non-use;
- Conduct occupant protection education programs for employees on their seat belt use policies and the safety benefits of motor vehicle occupant protection devices.

6A. STRENGTHS

- The Nebraska Department of Roads Highway Safety Office (NDOR-HSO) benefits from extensive program input from a wide variety of planning and stakeholder groups, including the “Click It - Don’t Risk It” Coalition, the Nebraska Advocates for Highway Safety, the Nebraska Interagency Safety Committee, the Strategic Highway Safety Plan Leadership group, the Drive Smart Nebraska ad hoc task force, and the Child Passenger Safety Advisory Committee.

- NDOR-HSO develops and distributes numerous educational brochures, posters, and other communication materials to its many stakeholder organizations, increasing message exposure for and engagement in occupant protection efforts.

- The Nebraska Safety Council and the “Click It - Don’t Risk It” Project, with grant support from NDOR-HSO, target low seat belt use counties and work with large and small employers and educational institutions to promote the development of seat belt and other traffic safety programs and the adoption of seat belt policies. The organizations are also encouraged to measure the effectiveness of their efforts with pre- and post-observational surveys.

- NDOR-HSO has compiled a lending library of educational videos on traffic safety themes and makes these videos available to their many stakeholders for use in promoting seat belts and child passenger safety (CPS).

- NDOR-HSO encourages grantees to conduct observational surveys to measure the impact of their projects.

- With support from NDOR-HSO, the National Safety Council, Nebraska (NSCN) conducted a successful public service announcement (PSA) writing competition that recruited PSA ideas from 5,000 businesses and resulted in a clever concept promoting seat belt use that was developed into four billboards.
• With grant support from NDOR-HSO, NSCN worked with 26 large and small employers to promote seat belt compliance among 26,000 employees, as well as the adoption of company seat belt policies.

• Project Extra Mile, with grant support from NDOR-HSO, engages law enforcement partners, community stakeholders, teens, and their parents in activities to raise seat belt awareness at schools, community events, and safety expositions. The project reached 32 schools, clubs, and organizations with 122 presentations that reached over 3,500 teens, parents, and teachers in 2016.

• The Nebraska State Patrol (NSP), with grant support from NDOR-HSO, uses a seat belt convincer, a rollover demonstration unit, and NSP Community Resource Officers to conduct educational activities that promote seat belt use. In 2016, officers attended 270 events and reached close to 150,000 people, taking special care to target low seat belt use locations. The promotion of media coverage, a requirement of the grant, reached an even larger audience with the seat belt message.

• NDOR-HSO fosters the development and maintenance of community-based coalitions that engage people involved in health and safety to promote a greater understanding of and involvement in traffic safety in Nebraska.

• At the annual Nebraska Conference of Police Chiefs and Sheriffs, NDOR-HSO sponsors an educational luncheon which affords them the opportunity to share crash injury and death information, promote seat belt and CPS enforcement, and emphasize the importance of seat belts for officer safety.

• NDOR-HSO has a useful form that grantees who conduct outreach activities are asked to complete that provides the agency a method of tracking the number of presentations given, the number of people reached, earned media efforts, and the message exposure attached to the work.

• NDOR-HSO grantees are strongly encouraged to provide the media with pre- and post-news releases about activities.

6B. CHALLENGES

• There are only two educational videos about seat belt use in the NDOR-HSO lending library and both are very old; one is 27 years old and the other is 17 years old.

• Nebraska Mothers Against Drunk Driving and law enforcement groups have awards programs that recognize efforts to reduce impaired driving; however, the State lacks a larger, more comprehensive awards program that recognizes occupant protection efforts.

• Some Nebraska CPS advocates have invited local legislators to their child safety seat events, giving them a firsthand view of the complexities of correct use and the
importance of properly restraining children. A more comprehensive effort that would expand on these successes and lead to greater legislative support for traffic safety initiatives has not yet been made.

- In close to 80 percent of Nebraska counties, motorists who get traffic citations can get those citations dismissed (provided they haven’t had a ticket for three years) if they attend a court diversion class. The extent to which seat belt use and CPS is promoted in the diversion class curriculum is unclear.

- Many traffic safety stakeholders are actively engaged in outreach efforts for occupant protection; however, informational packets containing statistical information and research findings are not routinely provided to them.

- Pickup truck drivers have lower seat belt use rates than drivers of other types of vehicles. Very little is being done to reach pickup truck drivers with occupant protection messages.

- The Nebraska Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) develops, prints, and distributes 200,000 copies of the Nebraska Driver’s Manual to people who want to obtain their driver licenses. The manual provides safety tips on a variety of driving skills and information on occupant protection laws, but it does not include tips on seat belt and child restraint use.

- Some high school teachers in Nebraska are promoting seat belt use among teens by making it part of their curriculum; however, the practice is not widely shared.

- Many driver education programs in Nebraska provide an educational module for parents called “Parent Night,” and there is currently no method of ensuring that seat belt use and CPS issues are covered during these sessions.

- Only a few traffic safety stakeholders have invited influential decision-makers to participate in their activities providing educational opportunities about traffic safety and potentially recruiting powerful advocates.

6C. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Develop an updated seat belt educational video for the Nebraska Department of Roads Highway Safety Office lending library. Use powerful personal stories of Nebraskans who have been saved as a result of seat belt use (or who have lost a loved one who was in a crash and unrestrained) and develop shorter versions of the video for use in web advertising, YouTube placements, and law enforcement training.

- Consider loading educational traffic safety materials onto a website and providing links to stakeholders who could then download the videos in order to avoid duplicative efforts and save on mailing costs and staff time.
• Sponsor a yearly traffic safety awards program to honor people and programs that excel in achieving occupant protection objectives. Consider consolidating with the awards program undertaken by law enforcement and Mothers Against Drunk Driving.

• Work with stakeholder groups and grantees to develop and implement a comprehensive occupant protection education and outreach plan. List opportunities for year-round earned media coverage, and list educational materials available for stakeholders, as well as where to go and whom to contact to obtain them.

• Engage decision-makers, including elected officials, to participate in occupant protection activities and media events.

• Ensure that court diversion classes strongly promote seat belt use and child passenger safety.

• Routinely update and promote available fact sheets on seat belt and child passenger safety issues. Include best available data and research, arguments for legislative upgrades, and costs to Nebraska citizens of crashes that involve unrestrained motorists.

• Develop and implement a seat belt outreach project aimed at pickup truck drivers. Work with organizations such as the state grange and county extension offices.

• Include information about the lifesaving benefits of seat belt use, common forms of child restraint misuse, and other educational themes in the Nebraska Driver’s Manual.

• Develop educational activities that provide teachers with the means to incorporate information about seat belts and crash forces in their classrooms.

• Develop seat belt and child passenger safety materials to be shared at Parent Night programs held as part of the driver education program.
7. DATA AND EVALUATION

GUIDELINE:

Each State should access and analyze reliable data sources for problem identification and program planning. Each State should conduct several different types of evaluation to effectively measure progress and to plan and implement new program strategies. Program management should:

- Conduct and publicize at least one statewide observational survey of seat belt and child safety seat use annually, making every effort to ensure that it meets current, applicable Federal guidelines;
- Maintain trend data on child safety seat use, seat belt use and air bag deployment in fatal crashes;
- Identify high-risk populations through observational usage surveys and crash statistics;
- Conduct and publicize statewide surveys of public knowledge and attitudes about occupant protection laws and systems;
- Obtain monthly or quarterly data from law enforcement agencies on the number of seat belt and child passenger safety citations and convictions;
- Evaluate the use of program resources and the effectiveness of existing general communication as well as special/high-risk population education programs;
- Obtain data on morbidity, as well as the estimated cost of crashes, and determine the relation of injury to seat belt use and non-use;
- Ensure that evaluation results are an integral part of new program planning and problem identification.

7A. STRENGTHS

- The Nebraska Department of Roads Highway Safety Office (NDOR-HSO) makes extensive use of motor vehicle crash data for the development of strategies and the identification of target populations for the State’s highway safety plans. Improving occupant protection is a key component of these plans.

- Analysts at NDOR have access to, and the ability to link, multiple traffic records data systems, including crash, driver, and vehicle, to support problem identification and program evaluation efforts.

- NDOR-HSO contracts with Health Education, Inc. to conduct their annual observational seat belt survey. The survey is conducted in early June immediately following the annual Click It or Ticket campaign. The survey gathers restraint use information for drivers and front seat outboard passengers. Observers also collect information on motorcycle helmet use, including an assessment of the type of helmet used. The observed seat belt use rate in Nebraska was 83.3 percent in 2016, a moderate increase from the previous year rate of 79.6 percent.
The annual observational seat belt survey and statistical sampling of site locations were conducted by Health Education, Inc. and the statistical sample was reviewed and approved by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Trained field observers conduct the on-site observations. Health Education, Inc. staff are responsible for observer training, quality control of the data collection, and calculation of the final observed use rate. An executive summary of the survey report is provided to NDOR-HSO annually and is available on its website. A more comprehensive report is also compiled and available upon request. Nebraska’s re-sampling of roadway segments has been completed and approved for the 2017 observation period.

Health Education, Inc. performs an annual child safety seat observation survey in September. The results of this survey are provided to NDOR-HSO and made available on its website.

NDOR-HSO contracts with Research Associates to conduct an annual Nebraska Traffic Safety Study. The 2016 survey included 36 questions related to a variety of topics involving highway safety. While the majority of the questions remain the same from year-to-year, NDOR-HSO staff has the flexibility to add additional questions related to current areas of interest. The survey is designed to allow generalization of the results to the entire State. Approximately 900 drivers are included each year through both land-line and cell phone contacts.

NDOR-HSO coordinates child safety seat checks in conjunction with the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Safe Kids program. The inspection stations collect basic information related to the people that avail themselves of this service. Data collected from the inspection stations are sent to DHHS who then forwards them to the national Safe Kids office. These data are available to State and local coordinators through the national website.

NDOR compiles and produces an array of data products that include trend analysis of occupant protection data over time and across the State’s 93 counties. Those data include restraint use as indicated on the police crash report, including child safety seats and booster seats.

Nebraska’s Crash Outcome Data Evaluation System (CODES) is housed at the DHHS. CODES analysts regularly link the State’s crash and injury surveillance data systems for analysis. These data are used to support a variety of highway safety programs and efforts through the development of reports and fact sheets. The use of injury surveillance data allows for a more accurate description of injury severity and the local costs associated with motor vehicle crashes and their sequelae.

Excellent relationships exist between NDOR, NDOR-HSO, and DHHS that allow for a comprehensive approach to data analysis and evaluation efforts.

Each NDOR-HSO law enforcement grantee is required to track and submit information related to the number of citations issued during their high-visibility enforcement
campaigns. They also conduct before and after belt observations using a convenience sample of 100 vehicles.

- Analysis of the available crash data is accessible by submitting data requests to NDOR or DHHS. Completed reports are often made available on the Department’s website. Crash data are available through 2015 with 2016 data expected to be released by May 1.

- Nebraska uses available data from State crash reports to identify high priority counties through the number of fatalities and serious injuries.

**7B. CHALLENGES**

- According to the Fatality Analysis Reporting System, Nebraska had 246 passenger vehicle occupant fatalities in 2015. Of those, 118 (48 percent) were reportedly unrestrained.

- Following a nationwide trend, Nebraska experienced an increase in motor vehicle fatalities in recent years. The number of unrestrained fatalities in 2015 (118) is the highest since 2007. Identifying the risk factors and characteristics associated with that increase will require additional analysis of the State’s available highway safety data.

- Restraint use as identified on the police crash report is often dependent on self-report, particularly with regard to non-injury crashes.

- Several of Nebraska’s traffic records data systems are undergoing system upgrades. Notably, the current version of the crash report was developed a decade ago and does not adhere to current standards.

- Nebraska covers a large geographic area with population centers concentrated in the eastern third of the State. Currently available data may not be sufficient to provide detailed county-specific analysis.

- Citations are only available at the agency level. A comprehensive citation system is under development but statewide citation data is not currently available that would allow for a more comprehensive evaluation of trends and adjudication patterns.

- Not all police agencies report crash data to the State system electronically. Currently, approximately 10 percent of reports are submitted on paper and require additional processing time by the State. Complete crash data for 2016 are not expected to be available until May 2017. Additionally, the State requires a separate report to be submitted by each driver involved in a crash where the damage estimate exceeds $1,000. These reports are nearly identical to the investigation report and may unnecessarily add processing time to the completion of the annual data file.

- While NDOR and DHHS respond promptly to data requests, there is no mechanism
available for the public or other highway safety partners to conduct simple queries on the crash data system due to legal concerns.

- The locations used for the child safety seat observational survey have remained fairly static for over a decade and may no longer be appropriate for observing sufficient numbers of child safety seats.

- The child restraint observational survey only determines restraint use by children under the age of six.

- Aside from motorcycle helmets, the annual observational survey does not include a breakdown of any additional occupant or vehicle characteristics.

- The use of police reported restraint use alone may not accurately reflect the belt use rate of a particular region or county.

7C. RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Develop a simple online query system that will allow local highway safety partners and other interested parties to access crash data. The database can be sanitized to remove personal identifying information and location information.**

- Consider maintaining a local database of information collected from all child safety seat inspections conducted in the State. Use this information in conjunction with the observational surveys to support or modify education and media campaigns as necessary.

- Identify pickup trucks during the annual observational survey. This will provide an additional level of detail and may help tailor future education campaigns to increase seat belt use.

- Consider expanding the child restraint observational survey to include children between the ages of six and 13.

- Compare and contrast data from the child restraint observational survey and from the Safe Kids inspection stations to provide a more complete and accurate depiction of proper child restraint use in the State.

- **Complete the development of a centralized, statewide citation database. Use this information in conjunction with crash data to support future planning for all traffic enforcement activities.**

- **Remove the requirement for the completion of a separate driver report in addition to the investigation report.** Alternatively, limit the requirement for submission of the form to crashes where weather or other circumstances prevent law enforcement from responding to the scene.
- Revise the crash report form to include additional data elements and attributes as defined in the most current version of the Model Minimum Uniform Crash Criteria standard.

- Explore the possibility of making injury surveillance data available through an online query system. This data will help local agencies provide their partners with information specific to their region that will help with outreach and education programs.
## APPENDIX

### Table 1: Nebraska – Child Passenger Safety (CPS) Technicians/Instructors

(as of March 2017)

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*3 of Nebraska’s 46 Special Needs Technicians are also Special Needs Instructors
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Table 2: Nebraska – Inspection Stations

Note: Not all Nebraska counties are included in this chart. Chart shows only counties served by Inspections Stations. (2/1/2017)

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<td>18,907</td>
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<td>39,078</td>
<td>14.98%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20,171</td>
<td>15.29%</td>
<td>18,907</td>
<td>14.66%</td>
<td>39,078</td>
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<td>5,102</td>
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<td>78,284</td>
<td>30.01%</td>
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<td>3,385</td>
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<td>0.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sarpy</td>
<td>13,377</td>
<td>10.14%</td>
<td>13,237</td>
<td>10.27%</td>
<td>26,614</td>
<td>10.20%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14,962</td>
<td>11.34%</td>
<td>15,037</td>
<td>11.66%</td>
<td>29,999</td>
<td>11.50%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dodge</td>
<td>2,500</td>
<td>1.90%</td>
<td>2,458</td>
<td>1.91%</td>
<td>4,958</td>
<td>1.90%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saunders</td>
<td>1,398</td>
<td>1.06%</td>
<td>1,463</td>
<td>1.13%</td>
<td>2,861</td>
<td>1.10%</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>1,195</td>
<td>0.91%</td>
<td>1,387</td>
<td>1.08%</td>
<td>2,582</td>
<td>0.99%</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5,093</td>
<td>3.86%</td>
<td>5,308</td>
<td>4.12%</td>
<td>10,401</td>
<td>3.99%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>State Population</td>
<td>131,908</td>
<td>128,928</td>
<td>260,837</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webster</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>0.18%</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>0.16%</td>
<td>434</td>
<td>0.17%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>0.18%</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>0.16%</td>
<td>434</td>
<td>0.17%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dawes    495 0.38% 460 0.36% 955 0.37% 1 0.0 0.1 0.2 0.1 0.2 0.4
Sheridan 328 0.25% 360 0.28% 688 0.26% 0.0 0.1 0.1 0.1 0.1 0.1 0.3
Sioux     64 0.05% 91 0.07% 155 0.06% 0.0 0.0 0.0 0.0 0.0 0.0 0.1
Total     887 0.67% 911 0.71% 1,798 0.69% 1 0.1 0.2 0.4 0.2 0.4 0.7
AGENDA

2017 Nebraska Occupant Protection Assessment
Country Inn & Suites, Lincoln, NE

Sunday, March 12, 2017

Evening – Joint Meeting/Reception: Assessment Team
Fred Zwonechek, Linda Kearns, Simera Reynolds

Monday, March 13, 2017

8:30 am – 10:00 am – Session 1
Introductions/ Program Management

Fred Zwonechek Highway Safety Administrator, NDOR-HSO
Linda Kearns Traffic Safety Specialist Supervisor, NDOR-HSO
Simera Reynolds Traffic Safety Specialist, NDOR-HSO

10:00 am – 10:15 am - Break

10:15 am – 12:00 pm – Session II
Legislation, Regulation, and Policy

Laurie Klosterboer Executive Director, Nebraska Safety Council
Rose White Public Affairs Director – Cornhusker AAA

12:15 pm – 1:15 pm – Lunch

1:15 pm – 2:35 pm – Session III
Enforcement

William Muldoon Director, Nebraska Law Enforcement Training Center
Sergeant Jason Menning Omaha Police Department
Chief Chad Sprunk Fairbury Police Chief

2:35 pm – 2:45 pm - Break

2:45 pm – 4:30 pm – Session III
Enforcement, Continued

Sheriff Terry Wagner Lancaster County Sheriff’s Office
Lt. Col. Tom Shwarten Nebraska State Patrol
Major Mike Gaudreault Nebraska State Patrol, Field Services
Sergeant Todd Kocijan  
Lincoln Police Department, Traffic Unit  
Becky Stinson  
Traffic Safety Specialist, NDOR-HSO

Tuesday, March 14, 2017

9:00 am – 10:40 am – Session IV  
Communications Program

Fred Zwonechek  
Administrator, NDOR-HSO  
Linda Kearns  
Traffic Safety Specialist Supervisor, NDOR-HSO  
Brendan Evans  
Research Associates – Social Marketing  
Jeanne Bietz  
Motor Vehicle Safety Coordinator, DHHS

10:40 am – 10:50 am – Break

10:50 am – 12:20 pm – Session V  
Child Passenger Safety

Jason Kerkman  
Department of Health and Human Services, Safe Kids Coordinator  
Amanda Ablott, RN CPN  
Safe Kids South Central, Marry Lanning Healthcare, Hastings, NE  
Julie Anderson  
Safe Kids Lincoln/Lancaster County Health Department, Health Educator II  
Simera Reynolds  
Traffic Safety Specialist, Occupant Protection Coordinator, NDOR-HSO

12:20 pm – 1:15 pm – Lunch

1:15 pm – 3:45 pm – Session VI  
Data and Evaluation

2:50 pm – 3:10 pm - Break

Sean Owings  
Nebraska Department of Roads, Analyst  
Bill Kovarik  
Traffic Safety Specialist, Traffic Records Coordinator, NDOR-HSO  
Ashley Newmyer  
Department of Health and Human Services, CODES Coordinator  
Barb Derrick  
Research Associates, Partner

Wednesday, March 15, 2017

9:00 am – 10:30 am – Session VII  
Outreach Programs (Diverse Populations, Local Health Districts, Teens)

Laura McDougal  
Executive Director, Four Corners Health Department  
Catlin Moore  
Health Educator, Public Health Solutions
Simera Reynolds        Traffic Safety Specialist, NDOR-Highway Safety Office

10:30 am – 10:45 am – Break

10:45 am – 12:15 pm – Session VII
Outreach Programs, Continued

Jeanne Bietz        Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, Motor
Vehicle Safety Coordinator Teens in the Driver Seat
Sara O’Rourke        Administrator, Driver Licensing Services, Department of Motor
Vehicles
Kim Watson          Teens in the Driver’s Seat, Malcolm High School
Mark Segerstrom      Project Coordinator, Road Safety Campaign
Laurie Klosterboer   Executive Director, Nebraska Safety Council

12:15 pm – 12:25 pm – Break

12:25 pm - 1:00 pm – Wrap-up with State

Fred Zwonechek      Highway Safety Administrator, NDOR-HSO
Simera Reynolds      Traffic Safety Specialist, NDOR-HSO

1:00 pm – on
Team member Discussion, Deliberation and Report Preparation

Thursday, March 16, 2017

Team Member Discussion, Deliberation and Report Preparation

Friday, March 17, 2017

9:00 am – Final Report Out
ASSESSMENT TEAM CREDENTIALS

SUSAN N. BRYANT, M.A., M.B.A.

leaderservices@yahoo.com

Susan (Sue) Bryant is currently a consultant with her own company based in Iowa after almost thirty years of employment with the state of Texas. She retired as the director of the public transportation division of the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT). As division director, she managed 180 employees and an approximately $150 million budget of federal and state grant programs for rural and small urban transportation systems, the state’s medical transportation program, and public transportation planning. Prior to public transportation division director, she served for over 10 years as the director of the Texas traffic safety program.

During her career with TxDOT, she also held the positions of assistant to the deputy director for field operations, highway safety planner and traffic safety program manager. She served as secretary and member of the board of the National Association of Governors’ Highway Safety Representatives (now Governors Highway Safety Association) and member of the law enforcement committee for the Transportation Research Board.

She facilitated the strategic planning process for the Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA) and completed a “How to Manual” for occupant protection for children for GHSA. She headed a project in Texas to conduct community assessments and develop local strategic plans for underage drinking prevention. In addition, she served as community liaison for the Travis County Alliance for a Safe Community, an underage drinking prevention coalition based in Austin.

She has served on 43 highway safety program assessment teams for 31 states and territories. These have included assessments for impaired driving, occupant protection, and pedestrian/bike safety. She served on the teams to update the impaired driving assessment and occupant protection assessment and on the team to develop assessment team training.

She has taught high school, college, and adults and serves as an adjunct professor in communications. She has consulted for the media in major television markets, and also teaches management to state and local officials. She was named to “Who’s Who of American Women,” received the national Award for Public Service from the U.S. Department of Transportation, and is a two-time recipient of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) President’s Modal Award for highway safety.

A Phi Beta Kappa graduate with Highest Honors in English from the University of Iowa, she holds a master’s degree in communications from the University of Iowa and a master’s degree in business administration from the University of Texas at Austin.
Mr. Kerns has been with the University of Maryland’s National Study Center for Trauma and EMS since 1990. He received a Bachelor’s Degree in Natural Science from The Johns Hopkins University in 1986, a Master’s Degree in Epidemiology and Emergency Health Services from the University of Maryland in 1988, and is currently a PhD candidate in Epidemiology at the University of Maryland. During his time at the Study Center, he has gained considerable experience in the analysis and use of large datasets relating to motor vehicle crashes and injury. He has co-authored a number of journal articles on highway safety and has presented results from independent research projects at local and national health and injury conferences.

Mr. Kerns is currently the project manager of the Comprehensive Traffic Safety Analysis project funded by the Maryland Highway Safety Office, and the Crash Injury Research and Engineering Network (CIREN) project funded by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). He is a member of the Board of Directors for the Maryland Division of the American Trauma Society and past President of the Association of Traffic Safety Information Professionals (ATSIP). Mr. Kerns has worked closely with Maryland’s Highway Safety Office to conduct the State’s occupant protection surveys for the past 20 years.

Program Director, National Study Center for Trauma and Emergency Medical Systems, University of Maryland, Baltimore

BA Johns Hopkins University, 1986; MS University of Maryland Baltimore County, 1988; PhD Candidate University of Maryland Baltimore
ANGELA OSTERHUBER

aosterhuber@paaap.org

Angela Osterhuber has more than 25 years of experience in traffic safety providing educational programs and resources for the safe transportation of children. Areas of focus include child safety in family vehicles, school buses and school vehicles, as well as transportation of children with special health care needs, teen drivers and passengers, bicycle safety, and pedestrian safety.

Angela administers the Traffic Injury Prevention Project, a program of the Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. This statewide program is responsible for the development and implementation of child passenger safety (CPS) initiatives to meet community needs, support the efforts of CPS technicians/instructors, and provide public information and education. Training and technical assistance is provided to community loan programs, inspection sites, physician practices and hospitals, law enforcement, EMS/fire rescue, and school transportation. An informational website and statewide “800” phone line are maintained as a resource for Pennsylvania.

As an advocate for child passenger safety, Angela serves as the designated State CPS contact and is a past member and chair of the National Child Passenger Safety Board. Angela is a certified CPS instructor for the National Standardized Child Passenger Safety Course and participated in the "Safe Travel for All Children" and “Child Passenger Restraint Systems on School Buses” enrichment courses to be a resource for children with special needs and the safe transportation of school-age children. Angela holds a bachelor’s degree from Seton Hall University and a master’s degree in Counseling Education from Temple University.
A recently retired Senior Program Manager with the Traffic Safety Commission of Washington State, over the course of her career Jonna managed the *Click it or Ticket* Seat Belt Program for many years, as well as programs involving child passenger safety, teen drivers, distracted driving and other traffic safety issues. For 14 years she was the Director of Communications for the Commission. Under her direction, the Washington seat belt use rate was either the highest or among the highest in the country for five years in a row, including the highest seat belt use rate ever achieved in Washington of 97.6 percent. Her prior work includes another eight years managing communications programs for the Washington State departments of Fisheries, Wildlife and Ecology, and eight years as a news reporter.

Jonna has a Bachelor of Science degree in journalism from the University of Oregon and a Master’s degree in psychology from St. Martin’s University. Programs she managed received numerous national awards (*Click It or Ticket*, teen traffic safety and the TACT projects) and she received a Lifetime of Achievement in Traffic Safety award from the Commission in December 2015.
THOMAS WOODWARD

t.woodward@myactv.net

PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND

Thomas Woodward retired as a Lieutenant from the Maryland State Police on July 1, 2013, after a 36 year law enforcement career. He served with the Maryland State Police for 28 years. He was rehired in a civilian capacity by the Maryland State Police in January 2014 and appointed by the Governor’s Highway Safety Representative as the Maryland Drug Recognition Expert (DRE) Coordinator.

At the time of his retirement Mr. Woodward was the Commander of the Maryland State Police, Hagerstown Barrack. He previously served as the Commander of the Chemical Test for Alcohol Unit, a staff officer for the Chief of the Field Operations Bureau, and as the Executive Officer for the Commander of the Transportation Safety Division.

Mr. Woodward has been a Standardized Field Sobriety Testing (SFST) Instructor, certified through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), since August 1989. He also instructs the NHTSA SFST Instructor Development Course.

Mr. Woodward was certified as a Drug Recognition Expert (DRE) in July 1991. He was then certified as a DRE Instructor in April, 1992 and received instruction as a DRE Course Manager in June 1995. He served as the DRE Coordinator for the state of Maryland for 8 years.

Mr. Woodward was recognized by the Maryland Highway Safety Office for innovation in the development of impaired driving and nighttime seat belt enforcement programs.

Working as a private consultant Mr. Woodward has conducted highway safety program assessments for 13 states since his retirement.

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

Mr. Woodward received a Bachelor’s Degree in Organizational Leadership and Development from Wheeling Jesuit University in May 2005. He is also a graduate of the Northwestern University School of Police Staff and Command.