

Hospitals encouraged to provide child passenger safety training, resources

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Guidelines to help hospitals develop programs to ensure all children are transported safely on every trip recently were developed by the Academy in collaboration with the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA), Children's Hospital Association and the National Safety Council.

Motor vehicle crashes remain a leading cause of death and injury among U.S. children. Car seats reduce the risk of fatal injury by 71% for infants and by 54% for toddlers.

Pediatricians play an important role as they advocate for hospitals to develop comprehensive child passenger safety programs.

The new guidelines, *Hospital Discharge Recommendations for Safe Transportation of Children*, emphasize that an effective hospital-based program should include physicians, nurses, therapists, administrators, risk management staff and community outreach team members. A successful program requires planning, identifying staff and their roles, ensuring appropriate training, providing a plan for continuous assessment of competency, and securing funds and resources.

The hospital should have access to conventional car seats as well as child passenger safety restraints or large medical car seats for children with special transportation needs related to their medical condition. Car seats and other restraint devices, including car beds and special seats or vests, may be sold, loaned or given to families depending on resources. Staff members with special training need to be responsible for determining the appropriate car seat or restraint device needed and for educating parents on proper use.

A coordinator, who is a certified child passenger safety technician, should be responsible for policy development and revisions; staff training and ongoing competency assessments; and maintenance of written educational materials based on current best practice recommendations and state child passenger safety laws.

Development of standardized documentation in the medical record, maintenance of car seat and restraint inventory, obtaining grants and donations as well as program evaluation also are critical for the program's success.

Policies, based on best practice recommendations of the Academy and NHTSA, should be developed to establish the hospital's standard of care for the safe transportation of children. An incremental approach



An RN at Riley Hospital for Children at Indiana University teaches a father how to install the convertible car seat in the rear-facing position. His child had outgrown her rear-facing-only car seat and needed to be moved to the convertible seat, which has a maximum weight of 40 pounds and maximum height of 40 inches rear-facing.

to developing a hospital-based child passenger safety program will increase the likelihood of success.

Guidelines in action

One long recognized example of a comprehensive safe transportation program for children is centered at Riley Hospital for Children at Indiana University Health in Indianapolis. The program has been developed incrementally to provide resources and training on safe transportation for all children, including those with special needs.

The program coordinator is a pediatric nurse who also is an instructor of the National Child Passenger Safety Certification Training Program.

One hundred child passenger safety technicians work throughout the hospital. Most are registered nurses, but the hospital has started training nursing assistants as well. The program coordinator mentors new technicians as they develop knowledge and expertise.

In addition, more than 60 registered nurses have completed the Operation Kids: Next Generation Child Passenger Safety Basic Awareness Course and can provide basic child passenger safety information to parents. They also refer families to inspection stations throughout the state, where parents can have their child's car seat checked for proper installation in their vehicle.

All of the registered nurses working in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) receive training and annual updates on passenger safety for newborns and how to complete the car seat evaluation for premature and other high-risk infants. Hospital policy calls for evaluating newborns born at less than 37 weeks' gestation and others at risk for apnea, bradycardia and oxygen desaturation when positioned semi-reclined in the car seat based on the manufacturer's instructions. Twenty of the nurses are child passenger safety technicians. Although not required, the technicians teach proper car seat installation at the family vehicle for every patient leaving the NICU.

Additionally, the program is expanding training and services across its 18-hospital network.



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RESOURCES

- *Hospital Discharge Recommendations for Safe Transportation of Children* are available at www.cpsboard.org.
- For more information on child passenger safety, visit www.nhtsa.gov, www.preventinjury.org and www.healthychildren.org.
- For more information on the child passenger safety program at Riley Hospital for Children, email Michelle Chappelow at mchappel@iuhealth.org.