

# Safety Checks

## Guidelines Child Occupant Restraints Safety Checks

These child occupant restraint guidelines have been developed to outline the expectations and to clarify roles for those who participate in a Safety Check. These guidelines apply only to the Safety Checks and do not apply to;

- “Check Stops” of the Alberta Impaired Driving Program,
- Car Seat Inspection Clinics or
- Education Sessions. (Think...Think Again)

### Purpose

The primary purpose of a Safety Check is to identify drivers who are transporting children in an unsafe manner by identifying major misuses or non-use of child restraint(s). This is an enforcement activity where offenders will be charged and receive a ticket(s). Safety Checks operate under the direction of the local enforcement agency.

### Roles

Enforcement officers are responsible for enforcing all aspects of the law and are in charge of all traffic issues including traffic flow at the site. Ultimately it is the officer’s decision as to whether or not a ticket is issued. Evaluations have shown that it is the ticket(s) that encourage people to attend the education sessions. Should a ticket be contested in court, the officer will be called to testify and can attest to the expert input of health services workers at the Safety Check.

Health services workers or trained volunteers with expertise in the area of child restraints, are responsible for consulting with and providing support to the members in determining major misuses or non-uses of child restraint(s).

### Definitions

Child Restraint - A Canadian Motor Vehicle Safety Standard (CMVSS) approved device designed for the use of correctly restraining children up to 18 kilograms (40 pounds). This also includes the use of the vehicle safety belt system or approved booster seats after 18 kilograms (40 pounds).

STEP - Selective Traffic Enforcement Program - A traffic enforcement initiative that targets a specific issue, such as occupant restraints or impaired driving programs. STEP campaigns strategically combine education and enforcement activities to increase public compliance to the targeted issue

Safety Check - An enforcement activity designed to enforce the law and provide a brief check of a child restraint for major misuse, a secondary outcome of this activity is to promote education and awareness. For those drivers who have failed to restrain or correctly restrain child occupants under the age of 16, they are provided with the ticket(s) and provided information on the "Option 4".

Think...Think Again Education Session - A class held for drivers who have received the "Option 4" which provides information to drivers/parents on the correct and safe use of their child restraints. Upon completion of the session, tickets are recommended to be withdrawn. These sessions are available to ticketed drivers Option 4 or non-ticketed drivers.

Option 4 - An additional option given to a ticketed driver that allows him/her to attend an education session rather than pay a ticket for mis/non-use of a child restraint. The usual three options are to pay the ticket, plead not guilty by mail or plead not guilty in court.

Inspection Clinic - An education activity designed to provide parents/care givers with information and hands-on skill development on how to correctly use a child restraint. This is a community education activity.

Misuse - A child safety seat or vehicle seat belt system not used correctly. This would include not following manufacturer instructions for either the restraint or the vehicle.

Non-Use - A child occupant under the age of 16 not restrained by the vehicle seat belt system or appropriate child restraint system such as children are traveling unrestrained.

#### Equipment For Enforcement Officers and Health Service Workers

- visible, readable name tags;
- safety vests (so enforcement officers can more readily identify health services staff);
- clothing for all kinds of weather conditions;
- Option 4's - enforcement officers have these pads with them;
- cheat cards - enforcement vehicles should have one;
- Alberta Infrastructure and Transportation "Child Safety Seat" pamphlet, also one page rear/forward facing information sheets and
- "Yes Tests" rear, forward and booster seats – available [www.health-in-action.org/aorp](http://www.health-in-action.org/aorp)

#### Process

1. Enforcement members approach all vehicles and determine which vehicles will be approached by regional health staff for inspection.
2. Health professionals complete a visual inspection to identify major misuses of the child restraint or the child in a seat belt system. Key questions will be asked regarding the age and weight of the child.

3. Health professional identifies error in use of child restraint and will consult with the enforcement member on the identified errors.
4. Member makes visual check to confirm health worker assessment. If the situation warrants and the driver is interested, health professionals may provide information/direction to assist in making minor changes, such as reposition seat belt system, readjust chest clip, and discuss proper child safety seat installation procedures. Do not make the adjustments yourself but rather have the driver/client do it under the direction of the health professional.
5. Enforcement officer issues ticket(s).
6. Once ticket is issued, the member discusses:
  - Option 4 and
  - the three month time frame on the ticket(s) - the first month is to find a session, the second month is to attend a session and the third month provides time for the paperwork to arrive at the courthouse.
7. Should time permit and the driver be open to receiving additional information the Health professionals may discuss details of the Think...Think Again Education Session and other opportunities for a more detailed inspection.

Provide written information the Alberta Infrastructure and Transportation brochure or the one page rear/forward facing seat diagram with a business card attached.

### **Reminders**

1. In a Safety Check a driver is not voluntarily submitting their vehicle for inspection, the driver is required to comply to the direction of a peace officer. Under these circumstances a driver or passenger may appear to be upset. If a health professional observes an upset driver or passenger, let the enforcement officer take charge. They are trained to handle this type of situation. A driver who is unhappy to begin with is more likely to file a complaint against you or what you have done.
2. From a liability perspective, it is important to remember that child occupant restraints fall under the Traffic Safety Act, Vehicle Equipment Regulations. As such, these violations are no different than other equipment violations. If minor corrections are required, it may be acceptable to have the driver/care givers make them at the Safety Check but it is not acceptable to take seat apart and make major adjustments on site. Major corrections should be corrected and discussed at inspection clinics or education sessions, but not at road side. Drivers or care givers should be provided guidance regarding where they can receive information or assistance and it is their responsibility to seek out that information and make the changes. We cannot accept responsibility for other people's behavior.

3. Checklists normally used in an inspection clinic should not be used in a Safety Check. Inspection Clinic Checklists are designed to be used in situations where clients have voluntarily come in to have their child restraints checked.
4. Safety Checks are an excellent opportunity to partner and develop an understanding of what happens in safety checks. It communicates to the public our coordinated effort to reduce motor vehicle injuries and demonstrates a whole community approach to traffic safety. Safety Checks optimize community resources and experts.
5. Have fun and think 'safety' while out on the roads.
6. This safety check process will be reviewed and revised annually.

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