



Georgia Traffic Injury Prevention Institute

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“Celebrating Two Decades of Traffic Safety Education in Georgia”

GEORGIA'S BOOSTER SEAT LAW

EFFECTIVE JULY 1ST, 2004. Children under age six are required to be in a child safety seat or booster seat appropriate for their height and weight and used according to the manufacturer's instructions. The law also requires children under six to ride in the rear seat.

EXCEPTIONS TO THE LAW. The law has some exceptions. For example, children under six are required to ride in the rear seat, but exceptions exist if there is no rear seating or all appropriate rear seating positions are already occupied by other children. In this case, children under six may ride in the front seat but must be properly restrained in a child safety seat or booster seat appropriate for their height and weight. Be aware of the potential for injury from airbag deployment if children are placed in the front seat.

VEHICLE EXEMPTIONS FROM THE LAW. Exempt vehicles under the law include multifunctional-school-activities-buses for five-year-old children. Licensed childcare facility vans that have met certain state safety inspection requirements and are used for the transportation of children over four are also exempt, until July 2007, provided five-year-old children are properly restrained by safety belts. (Taxicabs and public transit were already exempted under the existing law).

CHILD WEIGHT EXCEPTIONS TO THE LAW. For booster seats to be used properly, a lap/shoulder belt is required. There is an exception in the law that will allow a child who is over 40 pounds to use only a lap belt if there are no shoulder belts in the vehicle, or if positions that have lap/shoulder belts are being used to properly restrain other children. (Again, if there are only lap belts in the rear, the child may be placed in the front seat. Children must be properly restrained in a seat that is appropriate for their height and weight and used according to the manufacturer's instructions).

CHILD HEIGHT & HEALTH EXCEPTIONS TO THE LAW. If a parent can show that a child's height is over 4'9", that child may be restrained in a safety belt in lieu of a booster seat. A child under six is exempt if the parent or guardian has a physician's written statement that a physical or medical condition prevents using a child safety seat or safety restraint system. Be aware of the potential for injury from airbag deployment if children are placed in the front seat.

POSSIBLE CITATIONS AND FINES. The law provides that any person transporting an unrestrained child may receive up to a \$50 fine and one point. If that offender has a second conviction, the fine may double up to \$100 and two points. One citation may be written per child unrestrained or improperly restrained.

EASY ADVICE FROM THE EXPERTS. The Georgia Traffic Injury Prevention Institute recommends that all children ride in a child safety seat or booster seat that is appropriate for their height and weight. Although the law does not require kids age six, seven and eight to use booster seats, GTIPI recommends children remain in a booster seat placed in the rear vehicle seat, used with the vehicle lap and shoulder belt until they meet the following criteria:

When sitting up straight –

- back is against the vehicle seat back,
- knees bend comfortably at the edge of the seat,
- shoulder belt fits across the center of the chest,
- lap belt is low, touching the upper thighs, and
- the child can stay seated that way for the whole trip.

Child safety seats reduce the risk of fatal injury for infants by 71% and by 54% for toddlers involved in motor vehicle crashes.

GEORGIA'S PRIMARY SAFETY BELT LAW. Because Georgia already has a "primary safety belt law," it means law enforcement officers can issue citations just by observing any safety belt offense, unlike other states where a driver must first be stopped for some other traffic violation.

EVERY OCCUPANT UNDER 18 MUST BE RESTRAINED. Under existing Georgia law, every occupant under the age of 18 must be restrained regardless of where they sit in a passenger vehicle, including pickup trucks. State law requires that every young child be properly restrained in a child safety seat and that each minor, six years of age or older who is an occupant of a 'passenger vehicle' must be restrained by a safety belt.

**For more information about child safety seats and proper safety belt use,
call the Georgia Traffic Injury Prevention Institute at 678/413-4281
or toll free at 800/342-9819.**