



## **The Importance of Child Passenger Safety**

January 18, 2018

### **TRANSCRIPT**

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** Hello, and Welcome to Public Health Live, the third Thursday Breakfast Broadcast. I'm Rachel Breidster and I'll be your moderator today. Before we get started, I would like to ask that you please fill out your online evaluation at the end of the webcast. Continuing education credits are available after you take our short post-test, and your feedback is helpful in planning future programs. I also want to let you know that the planners and presenters of public health live do not have any financial arrangements or affiliations with any commercial entities whose products, research or services may be discussed in this activity, and no commercial funding has been accepted for this activity. As for today's program, we will be taking your questions throughout the hour by phone at 1-518-402-0330, or via email at: [phlive.ny@gmail.com](mailto:phlive.ny@gmail.com). Today's program is entitled, "The Importance of Child Passenger Safety", and our guest today is Paul Overbaugh who is the Child Passenger Program Coordinator for the New York State Governor's Traffic Safety committee. Thank you for joining us.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** So Good Morning, Paul. Thank you very much for being here with us.

**Paul Overbaugh:** Good Morning. It's a pleasure to be here.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** Excellent. Can you review for us what the web cast objectives are today?

**Paul Overbaugh:** Certainly. We are going to recognize the important potential of child passenger safety to reduce the risk of death and injury to child occupants in the event of a crash. We are going to describe factors that contribute to the high prevalence of car seats misuse to better inform client and families. We'll describe the process for selecting an appropriate child safety seat. And we'll identify resources to ensure child safety restraints are used correctly.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** And can you tell us more about the Governor's Traffic Safety Committee and your role on it?

**Paul Overbaugh:** Sure. The Governor's Traffic Safety Committee is New York State's highway safety office. We receive funds from the federal government and disperse them for traffic safety initiatives. In my area which deals with child passenger safety we are using the funds to educate parents and caregivers about the best way to use car seats and provide car seats to families in need.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** Excellent, so let's talk about why it is important to discuss child

passenger safety and what the impact is in the U.S. and here in New York State.

**Paul Overbaugh:** The impact in the U.S., in the United States is tragic. Children are at risk for serious injury and death in the event of a crash. We know major motor vehicle injury is a leading cause of death for children. When we talk about child passenger safety what we are talking about is the use of car seats or child safety seats or restraints. There are several ways to refer to them. Booster seat, car seats and seatbelts. Those devices are there to keep children zero to 16 safe in a motor vehicle. Everyone knows children need car seats of some kind, but they don't know how to use them safely or correctly. That's what we are trying to do through the governor's traffic Safety committee. The sad part is most of the deaths can be prevented.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** That's hopefully today with the information we are going to get out we can hope to reduce some of those deaths.

**Paul Overbaugh:** Yes.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** Tell us more about the status of child passenger safety in New York.

**Paul Overbaugh:** Sure. The status of child passenger safety is that there are a severe amount of children being injured in crashes. And in 2014 there were 41,998 children ages 12 and under who were in motor vehicle crashes in New York State.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** Wow.

**Paul Overbaugh:** The amazing fact is among those children hospitalized one in six were unrestrained.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** wow.

**Paul Overbaugh:** That's a large population of children that are unsafe in vehicles. What we need to do is educate parents so we can reduce the hospital stays and keep children safe.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** So what else does the data tell us about child passenger safety?

**Paul Overbaugh:** The data also tells us that as children grow in age, the use of restraints decreases.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** Interesting.

**Paul Overbaugh:** So it's common that most people think an infant needs a child restraint, but as the child grows into ages 3, 4, 5, they are saying why would I need a restraint? They should be able to sit properly in a car seat. What happens is that when children are unrestrained they are two times more likely to receive a TBI.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** Can you help us understand --because certainly we want to avoid the incidence of -- you're saying one in six children in the hospital were unrestrained and talking

about the instances of TBI. Help us understand how the correct use of car seats can help decrease the high prevalence of injury, deaths and lengthy hospital stays.

**Paul Overbaugh:** So the correct use of car seats is going to eliminate or reduce actually the amount of crashes and injuries that will be experienced. Properly used car seats are 71% more effective in reducing deaths for infants, 54% effective in reducing deaths for children age's one through four and 45% less likely to sustain injuries in children using booster seat children that are ages 4 to 8.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** So certainly the argument for using car seats has been well established by the data.

**Paul Overbaugh:** Definitely.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** So before we get into how and why so many children are riding at risk can we talk about how car seats should be used? What's the correct use?

**Paul Overbaugh:** The correct use for car seats -- first we like to say all passengers need to be restrained. We need to buckle up every ride, every time. It's interesting to note if the parent set the role model and uses a proper seat belt restraint then the child is more likely to be restrained and realize the importance of that.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** Sure. That makes sense.

**Paul Overbaugh:** They emulate their parent.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** mm-hmm.

**Paul Overbaugh:** It's interesting to note that many crashes occur at low speeds and close to home.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** Mm-hmm.

**Paul Overbaugh:** We want to focus on making sure these seats are used properly and that parents and caregivers know everything about them to keep their children Safe.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** Are there different types of seats that should be used depending on the size of the child, the age of the child?

**Paul Overbaugh:** Yes. There are several different types of seats. What's interesting about car seats is as the child grows the car seats need to change. There is rear facing seats, forward facing seats and then the seat belt. Parents and caregivers should test a car seat before they purchase it. Many stores will permit you to take a seat to your vehicle and install it to see if it is a good fit.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** Really? I didn't know that.

**Paul Overbaugh:** Yep.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** So what age group should use the rear facing car seats?

**Paul Overbaugh:** Children birth to 2. We usually recommend they stay rear facing until they reach the maximum height and weight of the seat. They are designed to cradle the child in a crash.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** Specifically in the event of a crash, how does that cradling help protect the child?

**Paul Overbaugh:** The shell of the car seat is designed so that any forward facing crash, all the crash forces will be absorbed by the plastic shell of the car seat. It will be a cocoon for the child to protect them in the crash. When you think about crash forces the formula is weight time's speed.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** Mm-hmm.

**Paul Overbaugh:** If you have a 20-pound child in a rear facing car seat, going 50 mph that's 1,000 pounds of crash forces upon that seat.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** I think those are important facts to relay to people. Sometimes people have anxiety about having the child facing backwards, so being aware of what the numbers amount to in the event of a crash is helpful.

**Paul Overbaugh:** Right. You bring up a good point. When we think about rear facing car seats the parent wants to see the child. So, many parents try to turn their child around too soon or try to buy the aftermarket products, which are nonregulated like the mirrors attached to a headrest. Remember the crash force dynamics. If that's a one-pound object attached to the head rest, if it becomes detached in a crash that's 50 pounds of crash force coming toward your child. We strongly discourage the use of aftermarket products or nonregulated items.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** Understandably so. Thank you.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** Can you explain for us what the different types of rear facing seats are?

**Paul Overbaugh:** Certainly. We have infant only or rear facing only car seats designed for children that are birth to 8 or 9 months depending on their growth. Some seats start at four pounds, some at five pounds. They usually go to 22 to 30 pounds. Most go to about 30 inches. We are concerned about the child's height and weight. Then we have convertible car seats. When the child outgrows the infant only car seat they can be placed rear facing in a convertible car seat which will have the same protection we talked about earlier. The other rear facing car seat is the all in one. That's designed to go rear facing, forward facing and be used as a booster seat.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** Is there anything else to keep in mind when we think about rear facing car seats?

**Paul Overbaugh:** Yes. We need to remember that we need to select the seat based upon the height and weight and age of the child as well as their developmental level. We need to remember the child's head should be one inch below the top of the seat and the harnesses that secure the child in the car seat need to be tight. And to do that, we talk about a pinch test. We have the parent or caregivers put a child in a car seat, tighten the harness. Where the harness runs over the shoulder of the child we ask them to pinch. If they can pinch webbing or fabric it's too loose. Another device we have in the car seat as a safety feature is a retainer or chest clip. That chest clip will attach at the armpit level and take the two harnesses and keep them together.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** Okay.

**Paul Overbaugh:** the reason the device is so important is in a crash the force is to have the child ride up the rear facing car seat. The retainer clip keeps the child in place or the child could be ejected out of the car seat. When it comes to installing car seats we need to remember that the right recline angle is necessary. Children who don't have good head control, can they sit too upright, their head can fall forward and it can block the airway. We think about children's legs. Rear facing car seats, many people say I have to turn them around because their legs are touching the back of the vehicle seat. We want to stress that we are trying to protect the head, neck and spine of the child. Head, neck and spine injuries do not heal as quickly or sometimes at all compared to a broken leg, cut or bruise on the legs. If you are using one of the other car seats that are convertible or all in one and they have a tether which we'll talk about later, we want it to be stored properly.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** That's a lot of information. Thank you. Let's look at a rear facing car seat installation as demonstrated by Stefany Scharf of Bassett Medical Center and Safe Kids Otsego County.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** Certainly a very helpful video. Is there anything you would like to add for the audience?

**Paul Overbaugh:** I want to echo things the viewers saw in the video and that is the harness judgment. In the back of a car seat there are different slots to use as the child grows. We want to make sure the harnesses are at or below the child's shoulders in a rear facing car seat.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** I can tell you I remember the first time I was babysitting for my niece and nephews and had to take them somewhere. My sister said, just put the car seats in your car. It was a bigger challenge. When she had been doing it for many years it came naturally. But for me it was a struggle to figure out the parts. So having a video like that certainly would have been helpful.

**Paul Overbaugh:** Yes.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** What seat will the child transition to after they have outgrown the rear facing and that's no longer the best option; what seat is next?

**Paul Overbaugh:** They'll move into a forward facing car seat. Usually after they outgrow the

height and weight limit that's recommended by the manufacture for rear facing or two years of age. In those forward facing car seats we need to remember to use the proper harnesses, the pinch test, and the harnesses for a forward facing car seat need to be at or above the child's shoulders which is different from rear facing. We also need to remember to use the tether.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** In the event of a crash, how do the forward facing seats protect a child?

**Paul Overbaugh:** The forward facing seat will protect the child with the use of the harness system.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** Okay.

**Paul Overbaugh:** As we mentioned the crash force dynamics before, that crash force will be used and absorbed by the harness of the car seat. Many forward facing car seats have reinforced slots in the back which will hold the harness and the child in place. Also the tether holds the child in place as well. It's noted that the harness -- the tether reduces head excursion by four to six inches.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** Really the importance of knowing where the tethers are and making sure they are in the correct places can't be overstated. What different types of seats can be used in the forward facing position?

**Paul Overbaugh:** We have several types that can be used. A convertible car seat. After the child outgrows the rear facing we can turn it around and make adjustments based upon the manufacturer's instructions and use it forward facing. There is a combination seat with an internal harness. After the child outgrows the weight limit of the harness we can remove it and it can move into a booster seat mode. Then there is the all in one car seat, the catch-all of car seats from infant to rear facing, forward facing and booster seat.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** Excellent. What else should we keep in mind when thinking about the use of forward facing car seats? Are there important things for viewers to know?

**Paul Overbaugh:** There are special considerations to keep in mind. Again, the position of the harness straps at or above is very important. Also the use of the tether, we can't stress enough the amount of times we come to a car seat check event or a parent comes in thinking they have done the right things for their child, but they have missed some key facts. The key fact is the tether. They say, "What's the purpose of the tether?" They have an educational moment where they can teach them how important it is to keep the car seat and their child in the safe position. It's interesting with the tether based upon the vehicle they can be attached in many different locations. It's important to read the owner's manual for the vehicle as well.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** What seat should be used ultimately children will outgrow the forward facing seats. What should be used after they are outgrown?

**Paul Overbaugh:** After the child outgrows the forward facing seat they should transition into a booster seat around age 4. Those booster seats are belt-positioning boosters. They are there to

raise up the child so the seat belt fits properly.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** Okay.

**Paul Overbaugh:** As parent and adults we know the seat belt will fit across the shoulders, across the trunk of the body and the seat belt, the lap portion will ride on top of our thighs and not ride up on our stomachs.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** Sure.

**Paul Overbaugh:** When children are small, it's hard to get the seat belt to fit right. A belt positioning booster positions the seat belt so it Provides the maximum amount of protection.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** Talk about the significance of that in the event of a crash. How does that seat positioning impact the situation?

**Paul Overbaugh:** It does impact. We want to keep those belts across the strongest parts of the body to keep the occupant in the vehicle.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** Okay.

**Paul Overbaugh:** You are safer inside the vehicle than you would be if you were ejected from the vehicle.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** Sure.

**Paul Overbaugh:** When it comes to booster seats, we need to realize there are many different types on the market she was from.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** What are some of the different types that are out there and available?

**Paul Overbaugh:** There is a high backed booster to support the head, neck and spine as well as we want the high backed booster to be used in a vehicle where there may not be a head rest in the back seat.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** Okay.

**Paul Overbaugh:** The backless booster can be used with a vehicle that has a head rest. Whether it be a sew-on or adjustable head rest. It will provide protection to the head, neck and spine. Also combination seats are there as well. They convert from the forward facing seat to a booster seat by removing the harness and the all in one as we talked about before.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** How do you determine if a child is ready to use just a seat belt?

**Paul Overbaugh:** Well, there is a five-step test we recommend. Just like parents are anxious to

have children facing forward, children are also anxious. They hear the children wanting to use a seat belt. We asked parents to go through five questions to ask the parent, well, is your child able to sit with their back against the vehicle seat for the whole ride? Are they able to bend their knees over the edge of the vehicle seat?

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** Okay.

**Paul Overbaugh:** Does the lap belt lie across the top of the thighs and does the shoulder belt fit across the chest and shoulders, not up on the neck or falling off the shoulder. Most importantly, are they able to stay that way for the entire ride? Most children will try to sit back as far as they can to pass the test. But many rides are long in duration in this part of the country. They have to stay that way for the whole ride.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** That's a really great set of five questions. I imagine it's a lot of information to take in. All of the information you have shared has been valuable. It is a lot for a new parent trying to do the best thing for their child. Are there rules of thumb to help parents remember this information?

**Paul Overbaugh:** There are tips we can pass along. For example, we want to make sure we select the right seat.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** Okay.

**Paul Overbaugh:** The right seat is so important. We go back to the child's age, height, weight, developmental level. We want to make sure the right seat is the one that's not been involved in a crash. The right seat is the one that's has not been recalled by the manufacturer. We want to make sure the seat is able to fit in the vehicle. We want to talk about fitting the seat in the vehicle. We want to make sure we put the seat in the right place. And we recommend the back seat is the safest place for children to ride.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** Sure.

**Paul Overbaugh:** Most vehicles have bench seats in the back. You can sit in two positions. When you decide the right placement of the car seat, look at the vehicle manual, again, to see the best position they would recommend. Then you want to see if the seat fits well in that position. Many people are educated to say the safest part in the back seat is the center position. That's the furthest distance from any side impact collision which is great but there are vehicles out there that have unique middle seating positions.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** Mm-hmm.

**Paul Overbaugh:** Some car seats don't always fit in that position. We need the right seat in the right place and we have to select the right direction. Rear facing up to age 2. Once they meet the maximum height and weight they can be turned to the forward facing position. One thing we haven't talked about today is the inch test. The inch test relates to how we install the car seat in the vehicle. Sometimes when parents come in, they do the best they can to secure the seat into the vehicle maybe as you did when you were taking your niece or nephew out. You wanted to



make sure it was tight but you weren't sure. So we have the inch test. The car seat should not move more than one inch side to side, front to back along the belt path. That's where the seat belt routes through the car seat to secure it to the vehicle.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** Okay.

**Paul Overbaugh:** And again don't forget the pinch test for the harnesses.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** Okay. Right seat, right place, right direction, inch test and pinch Test. All right. Can you tell me about educational resources that might be available to advise parents and caregivers on picking the right restraint system to keep a child safe?

**Paul Overbaugh:** Sure. There are "4 Steps 4 Kids", which is "The Right Seat Matters". This is a great resource the health care providers use to provide parents and caregivers when they are leaving the hospital or in any type of a training setting. This form is available in English or Spanish. This resource is provided by the New York State Department of Health. It is available on their website as a free download.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** Excellent. It sounds like the "4 Steps 4 Kids" explains the standard, So to speak, best practices for choosing an appropriate seat for infants and young children. What are other important factors to consider when thinking about the best way to keep our children as safe as they can be in cars?

**Paul Overbaugh:** Well, again, you have heard me reference the manuals. There are two manuals that are important for any parent or caregiver to keep in mind when purchasing a car seat and using car seats. One is the car seat manufacturer manual. That will tell you how to use the seat and how to install it. And you also need to read the owner's manual. That will provide information as to why there are certain locations that might be better than others or different ways to install a car seat in the vehicle. Then we want to talk about seat placement in the vehicle.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** Mm-hmm.

**Paul Overbaugh:** Many parents have more than one child. When you have two or three children in the vehicle you have to decide who will sit where.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** Yeah.

**Paul Overbaugh:** When doing that, you need to realize how the seats will fit. There are many families that have three car seats across the back of the vehicle. That makes it difficult, not only for the installer but the parents as well to maneuver children in and out over somebody else. You have to strategically plan the best configuration when transporting multiple children.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** So are there any other factors that should be considered when selecting and using car seats?

**Paul Overbaugh:** Yes. When you're transporting children with special needs, many people think you need to buy the most expensive special needs car seat. That's not always the case. A

conventional seat works well in many cases depending on the developmental needs of the child. There are great resources out there for special needs car seats parents can turn to. Another consideration is whether in the northeast we would have brutally cold weather as I'm sure you are aware.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** Oh, my goodness.

**Paul Overbaugh:** It's difficult for parents with children using car seats. We need to remember that when we are using car seats in the cold weather, those thick heavy snowsuits we like to keep kids warm in that are filled with so much fill, we need to remember that they have a factor that keeps the child warm. But also in a crash all the fill will compress.

That means the crash force is going to be that much distance that the child can move in a crash and cause injury.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** That's really important to think about. I don't have any children, but I have been bundling up. If I was taking somebody else into the cold I would bundle them up, too. That's good information. Let's take a look at a PSA the Governor's Traffic Safety Committee created to demonstrate how weather and bulky coats affect child passenger safety.

**The Governor's Traffic Safety Committee PSA:** As the temperatures across New York go down the tendency for parents and caregivers is to bundle children up. However, in a crash bulky jackets and clothing have the potential to decrease the effectiveness of car seats. In a crash, bulky clothing compresses creating a space between the harness and the child. Look how much space was created by removing the jacket. To prevent this, put the child in the car seat without the bulky items and make sure the harness is tight. Do the pinch test on the shoulder harness to double check. Then place the jacket or blanket over a child to keep them warm.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** Looking at the videos, sitting here and talking to you this morning, you have certainly done a great job explaining the importance of child passenger safety and providing some of the basic information. Now that we have the information can you talk to us about misuse and why misuse of child restraint systems is prevalent?

**Paul Overbaugh:** Yes. One of the major reasons for misuse is there are so many different types of makes and models of car seats on the market. Every time you turn around and go to a store you see they are advertising or promoting a new car seat that's the latest and greatest. With so many choices, people don't know which the best is. Maybe what they used and had a knowledge base with the old seat doesn't apply to the new seat. Reading the manual is important. That's another reason why we have misuse because they don't take the time to investigate how the seat functions and what it is designed to do. I think the technology in our industry for child passenger safety is evolving continuously. One example is the latch system. The latch system is an alternate way of installing a car seat into a vehicle without using the seat belt.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** Okay.

**Paul Overbaugh:** What it is designed to do is there is a piece of harness attached to the car seat that actually attaches to the lower anchors which are metal D rings that are actually part of the

vehicle's construction that will hold the car seat in place. A latch system comes to combine the lower anchors and the tethers. Latch stands for Lower Anchors and Tethers for Children. That's the acronym. It's talking about using the lower anchors and rear facing and when you use a forward facing seat and the tether.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** So given that information, what can be done to lessen the misuse and improve child passenger safety?

**Paul Overbaugh:** The child restraint laws are a great way to lessen misuse. The Governors Traffic Safety Committee is here to educate parents and caregivers about the best car seat to keep children safe. We are trying to work with law enforcement partners as well. Many times the law enforcement partner is a great advocate in the community to not only be there with the ticket but be there with help and education to show the parent and caregiver how to use the seat properly. These advanced enforcement efforts also work at the educational component. Sometimes nothing says I love you like a ticket. That's what our law enforcement partners do when they go out there. They are educating through enforcement.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** Okay.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** All right. With that in mind let's turn to Captain Michael Pavlock of the New York State Park Police to hear about "Bunny in the Park".

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**Michael Pavlock (New York State Park Police):** I became involved with child passenger safety when I became a police officer. One of the roles is traffic enforcement. You stop vehicles that have the violation of the seat belt law or child restraint law. Child restraint law in New York State applies to children up to the age of 8. Up to 4 they are required to sit in a child restraint seat or car seat. 4 to 8 they can be in a booster seat beyond that they can sit in a regular seat belt. Efforts to increase the usage of seat belts state-wide vary. But primarily use the educational and high visibility controls. We want people to see us, we want people to know we are out there. Whether it be a static patrol where you have multiple agencies and police officers in a roadway stopping all traffic. Checking for the compliance and use of child restraints. Also operator seat belts. Typically every single vehicle that approaches check point sites will be stopped and people spoken with. For a checkpoint and a high visibility enforcement detail you have signage up informing people they will be approaching a traffic point. We interact with the operator of the vehicle. We check to see if everybody is in compliance. The children are in seats or in a booster seat. If it's found they are in violation, moved off to the side where an officer can have a further conversation and advise them of the rules and law. And take appropriate action. For the state park police we have done "Bunny in the Park" every year. For several years now. "Bunny in the Park" is "Buckle up New York" in the park. What we did was adapt "The Buckle up New York" program to specifically put it into the state park system. Some of the misuse for child restraint law that we typically see would be the failure to use a seat. For whatever reason they may have, there is no seats in a car. They may try to put 3, 4-year-olds in the back seat with the standard seat belt. And fail to put in the car seat. My suggestion would be the parents just take a little bit of time and research some of the available seats and what is out there. The biggest message is to be

safe. The most important thing you will put in the car for the trip is your children. Be safe. Take the 30 extra seconds to make sure they are seat belted in properly whether in a car seat, a booster seat or even a traditional seat belt, lap, shoulder restraint. Make sure they wear them. They are children. They may try to pull out, move for a toy or something. It's all of our responsibility to keep our children safe.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** So that was certainly a lot of good information. In your role do you do a lot of work with the program? Are you familiar with how they operate?

**Paul Overbaugh:** Yes very much so. The video was fantastic. The New York state park police are great safety partners. The acronym he referred to, "Bunny in the Park. Bunny stands for "Buckle up New York". And what we have found through our research is that many people going to the park don't think of transporting children safely. They want to get as many people in the vehicle and into the park and have a good time of recreation. We need to remember to have the good time of recreation they need to arrive safely.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** Absolutely. Can you elaborate on the role of state and local police in child passenger safety? I think many people may not be aware of their role outside of enforcing the law.

**Paul Overbaugh:** Yeah. State and local police play a large role in child passenger safety. There are many law enforcement agencies that support our program by having their officers become certified as technicians. many agencies have fitting stations which is a place where they set up in their location and community where people can make appointments, come in and bring a car seat to make sure their car seat is installed properly. And another way law enforcement is involved is they participate in car seat check events. This would be an open time where anybody in the general public can come in and get the car seat checked. It is great to see law enforcement keeping the community safe.

**Moderator Rachel Breasted:** Absolutely. Can you talk to us about what the child restraint law is?

**Paul Overbaugh:** The child restraint law is that children up to the age of 8 need to be restrained in some form by a car seat or a booster seat. And that law was designed so that we can keep kids safe. the law has just been changed and in addition to that to say children up to age 2 need to be rear facing. That will go into effect November 1, 2019. We really need to keep kids safe and the law enforcement partners are great advocates for that.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** Excellent. Previously you explained the guidelines for child restraint systems aren't one size fits all. Are there other things to consider when thinking about the law versus best practices?

**Paul Overbaugh:** Certainly. We want to maximize safety to keep children safe in car seats, they need to stay as long as possible. They need to stay in the right seat as long as possible. I know many parents have told me that they prefer and even their children prefer to stay in the car seat or the booster seat instead of getting into the seatbelt. And the best practice would be to keep them there as long as possible. The law says up to age 8. But I know many families who have children

are 9 and 10 years old that don't pass the five step test to wear that seatbelt properly. In relation to that, they are going the extra mile. It's interesting. When we talk about booster seats and many parents drop off their kids at school.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** Mm-hmm.

**Paul Overbaugh:** There is peer pressure from the school age kids to say, you are still in a baby seat, a booster seat. That's where the backless booster seats come in. we have inflatable booster seats. It is very inconspicuous. It appears the child is sitting in a regular seat belt but they are elevated up so the seat belt keeps the child safe.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** That's good information. I can imagine the peer pressure once somebody has passed the aged required to be in the booster seats. But the best practice of making sure the knees bend over the seat and the back is upright, it's important to have a way to encourage people to do the safest option even when it may not be popular amongst friends. What are key strategies for improving child safety?

**Paul Overbaugh:** Education plays a major role in just changing the mindset of the parent to actually go the extra mile, take the extra interest to make sure their children are safe. That's what we are trying to do. We have all the educational material we provide and we take the time to invest in getting people trained in New York State to become car safety seat technicians and try to emphasize the educational component. Many people think of the Government Traffic Safety Committee as a free car seat distribution program. That's not what we are about. We are about education. While we have a distribution program for people in need and can't afford a car seat, we do provide an education that goes with the car seat. Funny story is they were doing a car seat check event in a local community. They were running out of car seats that they were distributing to people in need. The sponsors of the event went into the local store, box store, and started buying car seats. A shopper said, honey, don't do that. They'll give you a free seat. Don't buy that seat. That was a good way to show us that we have to emphasize the educational message more than just giving away a free seat. That's what we were trying to do.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** Really taking a multi-faceted approach providing the approach needed and also making sure everyone has access to the education and the more subtle ways even if you have the car seat are you using it correctly to increase child passenger safety.

**Paul Overbaugh:** That's correct. Many times the car seats are moved vehicle to sleek. Maybe in mom's vehicle today and dad's over the weekend. You have to install it in both vehicles. The difference between teaching someone to fish and giving them a fish.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** Absolutely.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** So let's return to Stefany from Bassett Medical Center and Safe Kids Oswego County to learn more about the importance of education for improving child passenger safe.

**Stefany Scharf (Bassett Healthcare):** Part of what I do is working with the trauma program. We had an accident one evening with a family in a minivan. Mother and father

were both injured because the parents took the time and secured all three children in that car, all three were perfectly fine. So much so that the infant stayed asleep throughout the entire event. The mother said to us, I took the time and that was probably the most important message that anybody could ever give to anyone. I am an Injury Prevention and Trauma Coordinator for Bassett Medical Center. I first became involved in becoming a technician as part of my job. The Child Passenger Safety Technician is somebody who utilizes their knowledge and expertise about child safety, car seats, proper installation and misuse. Very often two of three are installed improperly, unfortunately. Technicians often go work with different programs. They host special events in the community. In my case, I work with Otsego county and the law enforcement officers. They are another great advocate of proper use of car seats. We set up car seat stations. Car seat checks are important because we can assist the parent and caregiver in proper installation of the seat. Many parent and caregivers, their heart is in the right place. Even if they install basically correctly, there are little aspects like putting the handle back when they have an infant carrier. Little things we can tell that will ultimately keep their child the safest when they travel. There are different places we can direct a parent and caregiver to, to ensure the child is in the proper seat. People like pediatricians, physicians, health care workers, they provide a lot of basic knowledge. We give them information. The parents and caregivers will be aimed in our direction. They are often there as a crucial support person for us. They can enlighten parents as to how many services including hours are available. I had a family that had purchased car seats from a yard sale. The lack of knowing where they were from made us uncomfortable. They had three children. This mother just said simply, I cannot afford it. the greatest feeling is seeing the smiles on three children's faces, all leaving with car seats, that they feel good but more importantly the smile on the mother's face because she knew she had come to a place where people were going to help her, where her children were going to leave safer than when they got there. I know a lot of parents want to turn their children around too soon or get frustrated with putting their child in. take a moment, take a breath. Safety is really what it is all about.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** It's a wonderful video. Good to see the involvement in the role the technicians play. Can you explain how Child Passenger Safety Technicians are certified?

**Paul Overbaugh:** Certainly. Safe kids is a certifying body for Child Passenger Safety Technicians and Instructors. To become a Child Passenger Safety Technicians you need to be at least 18 years of age and you need to attend a certified course. That course is either three or four days long. It is a very intense course. The course consists of quizzes and exams as well as a hands-on practical examination. Not only do we want the technician to know all the background as to why the seat is important and how to use them. They need to know how to use the seat and basically the Child Passenger Safety Technicians are educators and not installers. Many people think if I go to this event I will get my car seat installed for me and be on my way. It's not a baby car seat installation service. It is an educational program where we teach you to install your seat to keep your child safe. That's what we do through the Course. Even at the end of each course there is a car seat check event that takes place where the students need to demonstrate their proper knowledge that they have attained in working with parents and caregivers.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** Excellent. Can you discuss other assistance pediatricians, physicians or health care professionals can receive that can help parents and caregivers when

they are selecting and installing the car seat?

**Paul Overbaugh:** Definitely. There are great resources out there that we can recommend that parents and caregivers go to such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. They provide great fact sheets and info graphics, podcasts related to child passenger safety. They also provide data and strategies for improving child passenger safety. The Governors Traffic Safety Committee where I work has a great website. What we do on that website and in the child safety area is that we provide all the information of the check events in the car seat fitting stations. So anyone who wants to get the car seat checked at a fitting station or car seat check event can go to our website and find out where there might be one close to their location. It is a great resource. Also we described the child safety advisory board. We can talk a little more about that later. We have a section of frequently asked questions for the law in relation to car seats and restraint. We have a great way to reach out and find a tech in the area. Another source is the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration or NHTSA. They have a great website with a nice aspect of helps you to find the right car seat for your child. By plugging in the age, weight, height, they can sort of steer you in the right direction to find the right seat.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** That's great.

**Paul Overbaugh:** They will provide videos as to how to install it correctly. And also the New York State Department of Health is an excellent resource. They have many materials they give away free of charge. You can ask for those materials by contacting the Bureau of Occupational Health and Injury Prevention or go to the website and download some of them as we mentioned earlier like the four steps for kids. Lastly, we have Safe Kids Worldwide. Not only will they provide information about car seats but also information about all the steps needed to become a technician or even go a step further and become an instructor or continue the message. They have another resource on the guide says the ultimate car seat guide which will be similar to that. It will help and steer you to the right car seat for your child.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** Excellent. Thank you so much for all of the information you have provided us today. We have questions that have come in from the audience. We'll take a few minutes now to see what the audience has to say and what they want to know about.

**Paul Overbaugh:** Great.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** All right. The first question we have that's come in is what advice would you give to an organization with limited capacity that wants to get involved in child passenger safety?

**Paul Overbaugh:** Limited capacity, I assume they mean they don't have many staff they can devote. What's interesting is to become a grantee through the Traffic Safety Committee and run a program you need only one Certified technician.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** Okay.

**Paul Overbaugh:** Basically the program that GTSC provides will give you funding. It is a

reimbursement program that will afford you the opportunity to purchase car seats and distribute them to people in need. As well as the materials needed to install them. What happens is that the agency will provide the labor or the personal services of their employee to provide the training and education. So it really doesn't matter what size agency. It is not a one size fits all.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** The car seats aren't one size fits all and helping people out through the Governor's Traffic Safety Council isn't one size fits all either.

**Paul Overbaugh:** Excellent.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** The next question, how can I find out about where and when there are car seat safety checks in my local area?

**Paul Overbaugh:** I think we touched on this. Through the websites we mentioned, you can go to the GTSD website for a current list by month of what car check events are coming up and the location they will be in across the state. We have car check events from Buffalo to Albany down to Long Island. Nassau County, Suffolk County. Even in New York City we have child passenger safety grantees doing great work there as well.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** Wonderful. Do you know if other states have similar programs and if that's outside of your expertise, but I wonder if people are viewing from other states --

**Paul Overbaugh:** All states in the nation are required to have a highway safety office.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** Okay.

**Paul Overbaugh:** They have some form of child passenger safety or occupant protection in that state. Many states do share in the child passenger safety realm for education. I believe in region two which covers New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, and the U.S, Virgin Islands there is a contingency of Child Passenger Safety Technicians. We have a conference once every 18 months for technicians which is a great way for them to hone up on their skills and stay on the cutting edge of the latest and greatest products coming out.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** Okay.

**Paul Overbaugh:** Within those five states, we have a great network of Child Passenger Safety Technicians and Instructors.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** Terrific. Another question that came in, where do the tech training and certification events take place around the state? How can I find out about those in my area?

**Paul Overbaugh:** That's are also listed on websites. You can go to the Safe Kids website and they list the course as well as the GTSC site. We have a page specifically dedicated to training and recertification. They can go right to the GTSC website and can click on the child passenger safety link and get right to that.



**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** I know most of the information is in the slides which is available on the website as well. Just to have people here and be able to download it.

**Paul Overbaugh:** Right.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** Another question that came in, what can people do with old car seats. She mentioned in the video somebody bought a car seat at a yard sale. I was thinking, if you are not selling it or donating it, what do you do with old car seats?

**Paul Overbaugh:** We recommend you destroy them. If they are not safe for your child, why would they be safe for someone else's child? When we have a person come in with a car seat we ask similar questions on the video. Do you know the history of the car seat? Did you buy it new? Was it ever in a crash? Do you know if the seat was recalled? Let's look at the recall list provided by our national partners and see if the seat is recalled or has any issues that might have impacted the safety of the seat. We can encourage them to get the fix from the manufacturer or replace the seat if they don't have a means to provide one.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** What if I have an old car seat that wasn't involved in a crash and wasn't recalled but my child has simply outgrown it. Still is the advice to destroy it? Are there other recommendations?

**Paul Overbaugh:** I would not recommend that you sell it anywhere – when they go to get it checked at a fitting station or car seat check event they'll say --

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** You don't know the history.

**Paul Overbaugh:** Therefore, you are taking a risk

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** Okay.

**Paul Overbaugh:** If you don't know the history.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** Sure.

**Paul Overbaugh:** How do you know people are honest? I might tell you I have a great car seat for sale. But, you don't know me from Adam. How do you know if I'm telling you the truth?

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** I suppose when it comes to protecting the lives of children we want to make sure everything is as it seems and taking unnecessary risks is what we are aiming to prevent here.

**Paul Overbaugh:** Very true.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** Another question, what would happen if someone was pulled over while driving and the children weren't properly restrained or not restrained at all?

**Paul Overbaugh:** The law enforcement would issue a ticket or citation to the motorist for

having children that are unrestrained in the vehicle. They might also advise them to acquire the proper car seats. If the car seats aren't installed properly in the car they might refer them to a fitting station or a car seat check event or they can get the education. That's why it is a twofold great benefit to have them involved in child passenger safety.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** They can provide the impetus to change and the resources needed for people to do the things properly.

**Paul Overbaugh:** Definitely.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** All right. We have another question that's come in. can you explain what the Child Passenger Safety Advisory Board is and who can join or attend meetings?

**Paul Overbaugh:** Sure. We mentioned the Child Passenger Safety Advisory Board information is found on the GTSC website.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** Mm-hmm.

**Paul Overbaugh:** It is a group of transportation safety professionals and agency representatives that gather together four times a year. We have taken the state of New York and divided it into 15 different regions. Each region has a representative that's sort of like a catalyst from the Governor's Traffic Safety Committee out to where the boots are on the ground. And we have conversations back and forth, in the process of educating parents and caregivers and providing great resources. One thing the advisory board is doing is that we are concerned with a number of technicians that certify one time but not two years later. Part of the Safe Kid's requirement for recertification is they have six continuing education units (CEU's)

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** Mm-hmm.

**Paul Overbaugh:** They also have a session where they get signed off on five installations of car seats. so between the six CEU's and five sign-offs and they have to participate in the local event of some kind, an educational event. We find the rate of returning technicians is decreasing.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** Okay.

**Paul Overbaugh:** So we want to enhance it across New York State. Currently we have over 1,800 certified technicians in the state which is phenomenal. We are losing many, many technicians every year. We are trying to increase the new technicians coming in and keep the ones we have already trained. We are providing educational programs to make those trainings to make the CEU credits more accessible. We are providing training and curriculum through the advisory board.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** Excellent.

**Paul Overbaugh:** The board is also there to be a nice caveat for the people on the ground. If you have a question you can reach out to your local rep and they can be a resource as well.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** Wonderful. Thank you very much for answering the questions and for all the information you shared on today's show. I hope it will go a long way in improving child passenger safety and keeping the kid's safe going to, from and about their daily lives.

**Paul Overbaugh:** Thank you very much.

**Moderator Rachel Breidster:** And thank you very much for joining us today. Please remember to fill out your evaluations on line. Your feedback is always helpful to the development of the programs and continuing education credits are available for today's program. To obtain nurse continuing education hours CME, CHES and Social Work credits viewers must visit [www.phlive.org](http://www.phlive.org) and complete the evaluation and posttest for today's offering. This web cast will be available on demand on our website within two weeks of today's show. Join us for the next web cast on February 15 focused on Advanced Planning for Independence and Autonomy. Additional information on upcoming web casts and relevant public health topics can be found on our Facebook page. Don't forget to like us on Facebook to stay up to date. Now you can also let us know how you use public health live by taking a brief survey at [phlive.org](http://phlive.org). I'm Rachel Breidster. Thanks for joining us on public health live.