



NATIONAL
**CHILD PASSENGER
SAFETY BOARD**

A program managed by the National Safety Council

rear facing • forward facing • booster seat • seat belts

September 2015 Instructor Update:

This was sent to all Instructors and Instructor Candidates on September 15, 2015. If you did not receive please check your spam folders and make sure your email address is current in your online Safe Kids certification profile. Thank you!

Most instructors agree that Child Passenger Safety Technician (CPST) Certification Courses are fast-paced and action-packed. It's wonderful to witness a technician candidate on the first day of class who has never touched a car seat transform into a confident advisor leading a parent through the education and installation at the final check-up event! There is certainly a tremendous learning curve for technician candidates, especially those who do not have the benefit of being familiar with child safety seats (CSS) at all.

While we certainly do not expect newly certified technicians to become experts on child safety seats in a matter of days, we do expect a CPST to have the ability to recline, re-harness and install a seat using Lower Anchors and Tether (LATCH), seat belt and tether and master the skill of locating critical information from owner's manuals and the LATCH manual. As we all know, the only way to mastery is by HANDS-ON PRACTICE!

As instructors we may sometimes incorrectly assume a novice understands the basics of making adjustments such as moving a rear-facing-only car seat handle position, loosening a harness, lengthening the webbing on a tether or finding the recline adjustment. There must be classroom time carved out for instructor demonstration as well as hands-on practice of these "basics".

The certification class is fast-paced; therefore, best practice calls for having a variety of training seats available to the class. Encourage technician candidates, or students, to familiarize themselves with every seat in the room, every moment they have (even on breaks if necessary), and to ask questions without reservation. The positive and approachable demeanor of an instructor is essential to the success of students, especially relating to their comfort in asking questions.

When the time comes in the course for skills evaluations/installations, students shouldn't be struggling or stressed out by the "basics" (like lengthening a tether strap or making adjustments for achieving the proper recline angle). One of the challenges of proper CSS installation here in the U.S. is the wide variety in vehicle and child restraint design. There are seemingly endless scenarios for installation and compatibility.

The National Child Passenger Safety Board (NCPSTB) appreciates comments from instructors and technicians, especially regarding the curriculum and best practices in the classroom. One comment from an instructor raised the point that the curriculum does not mandate installing a rear-facing-only seat with the base using a seat belt during a skills evaluation. Please see Skills Assessment 2, Scenario 5,

during which two relevant installations are requested. The first requires students demonstrate an installation of a rear-facing-only car seat with base secured using lower anchors, and then second to demonstrate installation of the same rear-facing-only car seat without the base secured using a seat belt. While it is not specifically requested that a student install a rear-facing-only car seat with the base using a seat belt, this particular scenario is meant to represent skills technicians need to understand while working with parents and caregivers. This is an excellent example of why hands-on practice is so critical, beyond the common skills required in testing. Realizing that there are several skills not specifically required for testing, these fundamentals are certainly intended to be taught in the classroom and in vehicle demonstrations as well as through hands-on practice.

Contact car seat manufacturers to get more information on policies for obtaining training seats for your courses. Contact information for car seat manufacturers is provided for your convenience on the NCPSB website (www.cpsboard.org/additional-resources)! Seek out the struggling students who don't have the benefit of familiarity with child safety seats as they may require a bit more time and patience.

Once students are comfortable with the technical skills required for installation, be vigilant about their communication skills. Can they explain what they are doing step by step? Can they structure advice around the explanation of crash dynamics? Do they communicate in a positive manner? Instructors can conduct misuse skills testing as role playing scenarios, meaning the instructor plays the role of a parent rather than an instructor. Ask students to identify what is wrong with the harnessing and installation and then make suggestions using the language they would use with a caregiver.

Finally, don't be afraid to share your wealth of knowledge that can only come from experience, especially regarding adjustment or installation scenarios you've faced that are not addressed in skills testing. Be mindful to never modify the curriculum, however, there are always "teachable moments" and tips you can provide, especially at the check-up event, that your students will benefit from and recall when they are in the field without you.

Thank you for all you do to keep children safe!

National Child Passenger Safety Board

www.cpsboard.org

www.twitter.com/ncpsb

www.facebook.com/cpsboard

www.youtube.com/cpsboard