

MODULE 7 • Introduction to Car Seats & Booster Seats

Module Agenda: 65 Minutes

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1. Introduction	2
2. NHTSA's Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard 213	3
3. NHTSA's Car Seat and Booster Seat Recommendations	5
4. Car Seat and Booster Seat Parts and Functions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress Check: Match Functions to Parts of Car Seats and Booster Seats 	25
5. How to Select the Appropriate Car Seat or Booster Seat	10
6. Car Seats for Children With Special Healthcare or Medical Needs	15
7. Progress Check and Summary	5
TOTAL	65 Minutes

Module Purpose

This module is an introduction to car seats and booster seats. It provides a foundation of car seat and booster seat information prior to learning details about each type of seat. Focus is on:

- NHTSA's Standard 213 and recommendations.
- Parts and functions of car seats and booster seats.
- Selection of car seats and booster seats.
- Car seats for children with special needs.

Module Objectives

- Identify NHTSA's Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard 213.
- Explain NHTSA's car seat and booster seat recommendations.
- Name car seat and booster seat parts and functions.
- Determine how to select the appropriate car seat or booster seat.
- Identify car seats for children with special needs.

Special Media, Materials, and Resources

- A variety of car seats and booster seats with instruction manuals for teams
- Child Passenger Safety A Parent's Primer: 4 Steps for Kids (NCPSB and NHTSA websites)
- Car Seat Registration Form (NCPSB website)
- Car Seat Questionnaire to Report a Complaint, Defect, or Incident (NHTSA and NCPSB websites)
- Community Resources Tool (Instructor DVD)

Video Titles and Times

None

Activities

- Progress Check: Match Functions to Parts of Car Seats and Booster Seats
- Final Progress Check

Preparation

- Prepare for the progress checks.
- Ensure that you have enough car seats and booster seats for teams with instruction manuals.
- Become familiar with the NHTSA resources listed under Special Media, Materials, and Resources.

1. Introduction



Display PPT 7-1.



Present module purpose.

This module is an introduction to car seats and booster seats. It provides a foundation of car seat and booster seat information prior to learning details about each type of seat. Focus is on:

- NHTSA's Standard 213 and recommendations.
- Parts and functions of car seats and booster seats.
- Selection of car seats and booster seats.
- Car seats for children with special needs.



Display PPT 7-2.



Present module objectives.

As a result of this module, you will be able to:

- Identify NHTSA's Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard 213.
- Explain NHTSA's car seat and booster seat recommendations.
- Name car seat and booster seat parts and functions.
- Determine how to select the appropriate car seat or booster seat.
- Identify car seats for children with special needs.

This module provides an introduction to car seats and booster seats. We will cover each specific type of car seat and booster seat in later modules.

2. NHTSA's Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard 213



Reference TG page 7-1.



Display PPT 7-3.



Review FMVSS 213.

NHTSA's Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard (FMVSS) 213 provides child restraint performance standards for children up to 80 pounds. Vehicle and car seat/booster seat manufacturers are required to self-certify their products as meeting NHTSA's FMVSS 213.

- These are performance standards and **NOT** design standards.

- Performance standards mandate how the product should perform in a crash while the manufacturer determines design.

The seat must meet federal crash performance standards.

- FMVSS 213 requires that child restraint systems must pass a 30 miles per hour frontal sled test that simulates a crash. NHTSA randomly tests these products to verify they meet the performance standards set forth.



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- Some specifics include:
 - Padding requirements around the head of car seats for use by children weighing 22 pounds or less.
 - Meeting flammability standards.
 - Buckle release pressure.
- Permanent, visible labels on the restraint must include:
 - Verification that it conforms to federal standards
 - Basic instructions for correct installation and use
 - Name and address of manufacturer/distributor
 - Date of manufacture
- LATCH on car seats must have two parts:
 - Tether connector to reduce forward movement or excursion (not required on rear-facing-only seats)
 - Lower anchor connectors to replace seat belts for installation

Manufacturers are required to provide a registration card with the car seat or booster seat and to notify consumers of product recalls.

The publication *FMVSS 213: Highlights of the Regulation for Child Restraint Systems* provides additional information and is located on the NCPSB website.

3. NHTSA's Car Seat and Booster Seat Recommendations



Ask question and respond to comments.

Q. What do you think influences caregivers when they select a car seat or booster seat?

Answers may include:

- Word-of-mouth
- Fabric design
- Illusion of comfort
- Cost
- Caregiver's physical limitations
- Doctor recommendation (who may give misinformation such as when a child can be forward-facing)
- Review sites such as the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) Reviews

NHTSA has a 5-Star Ease-of-Use Rating system that allows caregivers to determine how easy certain car seat and booster seat features are to use before they buy a seat. These ratings can be found on the NHTSA website and are updated annually. Some caregivers will use this information to help them purchase a car seat or booster seat.

[INSTRUCTOR NOTE]

[Sometimes caregivers confuse the 5-Star Ease-of-Use Ratings for car seats and booster seats with the star system used to rate vehicle crash worthiness.]



Reference TG
page 7-2.



Introduce NHTSA's car seat and booster seat recommendations.

Car seats and booster seats should be chosen based on the child's age and size as well as fit of the seat in the vehicle. Children should be kept in car seats and booster seats for as long as possible, and as long as the child fits within the manufacturer's height and weight requirements.



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NHTSA recommends four steps.

- **Birth to 12 Months:** A child under the age of 1 should **ALWAYS** ride in a rear-facing car seat. There are different types of rear-facing car seats: rear-facing-only, convertible, and 3-in-1.

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- **1 to 3 Years:** Children should ride in rear-facing car seats **AS LONG AS POSSIBLE**. It is the best way to keep them safe. The child should remain in a rear-facing car seat until he or she reaches the top height or weight limit allowed by the car seat manufacturer.

**Display PPT 7-7.**

- **4 to 7 Years:** Children should be kept in a forward-facing car seat with a harness until they reach the top height or weight limit allowed by the car seat manufacturer.

**Display PPT 7-8.**

- **8 to 12 Years:** Children should be kept in booster seats until big enough to properly fit in a seat belt.

In the following modules we will go into depth on the different types of car seats and booster seats available for children.

A **conventional** car seat is one that is readily available to the public, usually from a retailer. The conventional types include: rear-facing seat with or without a base, a convertible seat that can be used rear-facing for toddlers and forward facing for older children, forward-facing only seats, combination seats, high-back, and backless booster seats.

Safe transportation for many children with special needs can be provided with a conventional rather than a special needs car seat.

Many children with special needs may be able to ride rear-facing to older ages if they are small and fit in the seat longer.

[INSTRUCTOR NOTE]

[Go to safercar.gov/therightseat to download NHTSA's car seat and booster seat recommendations flyer.]

**4. Car Seat and Booster
Seat Parts and
Functions****Reference TG
page 7-3.**

**Display PPT 7-9.**

Review car seat and booster seat labels and registration cards.

All child restraint manufacturers must provide a label on the car seat or booster seat with their contact information. Caregivers are encouraged to register the seat with the manufacturer either online or by mailing in the registration card.

- Manufacturers use this information to contact owners about safety issues, including recalls, and are **NOT** to use owner data for other purposes.
- If a caregiver has not sent in a registration form, he or she can submit NHTSA's *Car Seat Registration Form*, or submit a registration form online through the manufacturer website. Encourage caregivers to register their car seat.
- A car seat or booster seat that is missing its label may be dangerous to use, as recalls cannot be determined. NHTSA's *Recall List* includes information on every recalled seat and is updated on an as-needed basis (when new recalls are announced). Recall lists and checklists should be used for every seat check. They can be accessed on a smart phone to ensure up-to-date accuracy.



Review car seat and booster seat testing and recalls.

While NHTSA does not certify car seats or booster seats before they go to market, they do confirm their standards are being met by randomly testing certain products on the market.

- NHTSA also tests products reported by the public or manufacturer to have a potential problem. If a problem is identified, the product may be recalled.
- A recall may be initiated through compliance testing or through defect monitoring. A seat that has a recall may be crashworthy and useable until the repair has been made. Follow the manufacturer's recall instructions.
- Manufacturers can identify the need for a recall before involving the government if they are aware of the problem. This information is made available by NHTSA on the *Recall List*.
- Manufacturers may issue a recall and a correction kit if a problem is found with a seat. Many times the consumer can correct the recall at home.

[INSTRUCTOR NOTE]

[Refer participants to the NCPSB website for the following resources:

- NHTSA *Recall List*
- NHTSA *Car Seat Registration Form*
- NHTSA *Car Seat Questionnaire to Report a Complaint, Defect or Incident.*]



Summarize topic.

Now that you have an understanding of NHTSA's recommendations for car seat and booster seat use, let's examine the seat parts and functions.

[INSTRUCTOR NOTE]

[Be brief as you review the seat parts and their functions.

Most of the parts apply to car seats but some do apply to booster seats. Point out those differences. More information will be discussed in the following modules.

Do not expand and discuss the parts in detail here. The purpose in this module is to help participants become familiar with the names and functions of the parts.

Provide car seats and booster seats to participants. Have them follow along on their car seat/booster seat as you point out each of the seat parts and functions. Participants can work in teams or small groups depending on the size of the group and the number of seats you have collected.

Parts may be called different things by different manufacturers such as a lock-off/built-in locking clip, splitter plate/connector, or yoke.]



Reference TG
page 7-3.



Display PPT 7-10.



Name car seat and booster seat parts and functions.

Let's review car seat and booster seat parts and their functions. Manufacturers may call parts by different names.

- **Buckle:** The buckle is where the harness system connects and locks.
- **Harness:** The harness straps keep the child in the car seat and spreads out the crash forces.

[INSTRUCTOR NOTE]

[Show the differences between a 5-point and 3-point harness on demonstration car seats.]

Two harness types meet FMVSS 213 requirements.

- **5-Point:** This harness has five points of contact that includes one over each shoulder, one on each side of the pelvis, and one between the legs with all five coming together at a common buckle
- **3-Point:** This harness has three points of contact that includes two shoulder straps coming together at one buckle in the shell or on a crotch strap
NOTE: This is **NOT** to be confused with 3-point (lap-and-shoulder) vehicle belt.

Other seat parts include:

- **Retainer Clip:** The retainer clip is the plastic buckle or clasp that holds the shoulder straps together over the child's chest and is positioned at the child's armpit level.



Reference TG
page 7-4.

- **Harness Adjuster:** This part is used to tighten or loosen the harness.
- **Harness Slots:** Harness slots are where the harnesses go through the seat shell.
- **Labels:** Labels affixed to the car seat or booster seat and are a required by federal standards.
- **Shell/Frame:** The shell or frame is the molded plastic and/or metal structure of the car seat or booster seat.
- **Seat Padding:** This covers the shell and/or frame.
- **Level Indicator:** The level indicator is the part of a car seat that helps identify the correct rear-facing installation angles.
- **Padding:** Some manufacturers provide additional padding or inserts that have been crash tested with the seat.



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- **Belt Path:** The belt path is the place on the car seat where the seat belt or lower anchor connector is placed to secure the car seat in the vehicle.
- **Recline Adjuster:** This allows car seats to be reclined for rear-facing and semi-reclined or upright for forward-facing use.
- **Splitter Plate:** This is the metal plate that connects the two ends of the shoulder harnesses to a single piece of webbing used for adjustment.

[INSTRUCTOR NOTE]

[Tell participants they have already learned about lock-off, locking clips, and lower anchors and tethers. Descriptions can be found in TGs. Point out the parts on your demonstration car seat.]

- **Lock-Off:** The lock-off is the built-in belt-locking feature on car seat that works with certain types of seat belts based on the same concept as a locking clip.



Reference TG
page 7-5.

- **Locking Clip:** The locking clip holds a car seat in the proper position during normal driving when no other locking mechanism is available.
- **Tether Connector:** The tether is the piece of belt webbing with a hook connector that anchors the top of the car seat or booster seat to the vehicle. It keeps the restraint from tipping forward on impact and can provide extra protection. Tether straps are most frequently used on forward-facing seats.
- **Lower Anchor Connectors:** These connectors are used in place of the vehicle seat belt to secure a car seat or booster seat. A lower anchor connector can be flexible or rigid.



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- **Detachable Base:** This is a separate car seat base that can be installed in the vehicle. The restraint (car seat) portion can be removed from the base and used as a carrier or, in some cases, turned around and placed back in the base for the forward-facing mode.

- **Adjustment Foot:** This is the part of the detachable base that raises or lowers to allow a rear-facing car seat to be installed at the correct recline angle.



Display PPT 7-13.

- **Carry handle:** These are plastic handles attached to the rear-facing only car seats that can be used to carry the car seat with the child in it when removed from the vehicle.

[INSTRUCTOR NOTE]

[Tell participants that while some car seat instructions allow the handle to be placed up while in the vehicle, others do not. Some car seats require the handle to be in a specific position when in a vehicle or when carrying the child outside the vehicle.]



Display PPT 7-14.

- **Foot Prop/Load Leg:** This pole or leg extends from the base of a rear-facing car seat or from the front of a forward-facing car seat. It is used to prevent or reduce excessive forward and downward rotation in a crash. Manufacturers typically use the term load leg for this car seat part.
- **Anti-Rebound Bar:** This hard bar is on some rear-facing car seats that help to reduce movement of the car seat towards the rear of the vehicle seat (rebound) in the event of a crash.
- **Instruction Book and Storage Location:** Both are required.

[INSTRUCTOR NOTE]

[Tell participants that as they look at and identify different parts of the car seat or booster seat, they should remember to check for obvious defects such as frayed harnesses or other damage. If defects are seen when assisting caregivers, CPS Technicians should encourage caregivers to contact the manufacturer and report the possible defect to the NHTSA hotline.]



Summarize topic.

NEVER modify a car seat or booster seat to make it fit. Minor modifications can change the way a seat performs in a crash.



Ask question and respond to comments.

Q. What questions do you have about car seat parts and functions?



Conduct progress check.

Let's review what you learned about car seat and booster seat parts and functions through a progress check.

- I will point out a several parts on a car seat. Without using your TGs, name the part and state its function.

[INSTRUCTOR NOTE]

[Go around the room and ask for part names and functions. Provide answers as needed. Some parts and functions are described below.

1. Retainer clip: Plastic buckle or clasp that holds the shoulder straps together over the child's chest at armpit level
2. Labels: Information affixed to the car seat or booster seat that is required by federal standards
3. Foot prop/load leg: Extends from the base of a rear-facing car seat or from the front of a forward-facing car seat. Used to prevent or reduce excessive forward and downward rotation in a crash
4. Detachable base: Separate car seat base that can be installed in the vehicle. The restraint (car seat) portion can be removed from the base and used as a carrier.
5. Splitter plate: Metal plate that connects the two ends of the shoulder harnesses to a single piece of webbing used for adjustment
6. Belt path: The place on the car seat where the seat belt or lower anchor connector is placed to secure the car seat in the vehicle
7. Harness slots: Parts of car seat where the harnesses go through the seat shell
8. Buckle: Where the harness system connects and locks
9. Seat padding: Covers the shell and/or frame
10. Harness: Straps that keep the child in the car seat and spread out the crash forces
11. Recline adjuster: Allows car seats to be reclined for rear-facing and semi-reclined or upright for forward-facing use]

5. How to Select the Appropriate Car Seat or Booster Seat



Ask question and respond to comments.

Q. What do you think a caregiver should consider in choosing the best car seat or booster seat for the child?

[INSTRUCTOR NOTE]

[Tell participants they should never offer any personal opinions about specific car seat or booster seat products.]



Reference TG page 7-6.



Display PPT 7-15.



Determine how to select the appropriate car seat.

The best seat is one that:

- Fits the child's age, size, and developmental levels.
- Fits the vehicle.
- The caregiver will use correctly each time.



Display PPT 7-16.



Review convenience factors.

Caregivers also choose seats based on convenience factors.

- Number and position of harness strap slots: *Is there room for my child to grow?*
- Automatic or 1-step harness adjustment mechanisms: *Is it easy to tighten and loosen the harness straps?*
- Rear-facing-only car seat versus rear-facing convertible car seat: *Is it more economical for my family to purchase a convertible or 3-in-1 car seat?*
- Detachable base options on rear-facing-only seats: *Is it more convenient for my family as extra bases can be purchased for every person driving my child?*

Behaviorally immature children may need to stay in a more restrictive restraint for a longer period of time than they might need based on size.

Avoid finding fault with what is important to caregivers.

- Some people are cost-conscious, while others want the most expensive model.

- For some children, caregivers will use a booster seat only if it has a cup holder and a place for their child's video game.



Display PPT 7-17.



Review used car seats and booster seats.

Sometimes the caregiver has selected a used car seat or booster seat. In these cases, the CPS Technician should get a complete history of the seat and find out if it was involved in a crash.

It is the CPS Technician's responsibility to work with the owner of the seat to review it – **NOT** to "certify" it as safe. It is the owner's responsibility to be sure all parts are present and in good working condition.

- The Juvenile Products Manufacturer Association (JPMA) suggests replacing seats after six years if the manufacturer does not state an expiration date on the seat or in the owner's manual. The reasons for this limit includes:
 - Possible deterioration of the plastic shell and other parts.
 - Possible loss/breakage of parts.
 - The fact that older seats will often **NOT** meet current government safety standards.
- Expiration dates vary by manufacturer. Check the manual for your specific seat.



Reference TG page 7-7.



Display PPT 7-18.



Review car seats and booster seats that have been in a crash.

Car seats and booster seats are, in most cases, made to withstand one minor crash. Seat replacement, however, is **NOT ALWAYS** required. Always review NHTSA criteria for assessing crash severity and car seat or booster seat replacement.

- No cracks or deformities (dented or bulging surfaces) can be seen by looking at the seat.
- The vehicle with the seat installed can be driven from the scene.
- The vehicle door nearest the seat is undamaged.

- There were no occupant injuries.
- Air bags did not open.

Check with the seat manufacturer for guidelines on when the product should be replaced.



Display PPT 7-19.



Review common car seat and booster seat selection errors.

Caregivers make the following car seat and booster seat selection errors include using:

- A car seat or booster seat that the child is too small for or has outgrown.
- A household carrier (or other device that does **NOT** meet FMVSS 213) as a car seat.
- A car seat or booster seat beyond its usable life or expiration date.
- A second-hand car seat or booster seat that is missing instructions and parts and/or has an unknown history.
- A car seat or booster seat that has been involved in a moderate or severe crash.
- An unrepaired recalled car seat or booster seat
NOTE: This is especially dangerous if the recall is related to crash-worthiness.



Continue to review common car seat and booster seat selection errors.

[INSTRUCTOR NOTE]

[Some caregivers who may have been given household carriers resembling a car seat may not know the difference.

A used car seat or booster seat lacking a known history/original owner may be fine, but there is no guarantee that it was not involved in a crash, has been recalled, may lack parts, or have other damage.]



Reference TG page 7-6.



Review how to clean and maintain car seats and booster seats.

Caregivers should follow manufacturer instructions for cleaning.

- If necessary, harnesses must be air-dried. Machine drying is too hot for the harness straps and will decrease their effectiveness.

- Use only mild soap and water and rinse with clean water.
- **NEVER** use any chemicals such as starch, bleach, or spray-on fabric care/wrinkle guard products.
- Never iron the harness.
- Never lubricate the buckle.



Ask question and respond to comments.

Q. What questions do you have about how to select a car seat or booster seat?

6. Car Seats for Children With Special Healthcare or Medical Needs



Reference TG page 7-7.



Display PPT 7-20.



Introduce special needs and car seats.

Transportation of children with adaptive restraints and special equipment is becoming more common in our increasingly mobile society.

Special consideration is required for a child with:

- A low birth weight or born prematurely
- Cerebral Palsy
- Breathing problems
- A cast
- Behavior issues



Display PPT 7-21.

The approach and criteria for selecting the best car seat remain the same as with any child.

- The first option is to use a conventional car seat if it meets the child's needs. Conventional car seats are easier to find and use and are less expensive.
- Appropriate car seat selection should be made in collaboration with the child's medical team.

- Whenever possible, consult a CPS Technician who has had Safe Travel for All Children training. Safe Travel for All Children is a two-day enhancement curriculum for CPSTs that addresses serving children with special needs.

[INSTRUCTOR NOTE]

[Tell participants that they can locate CPS Technicians with this training on the Safe Kids Certification website.]

**Display PPT 7-22.**

A special needs car seat is usually prescribed by a therapist and approved by a physician. It may need to be ordered from a medical supply company. All or part of the cost may be paid for by the child's health insurance.

- These seats may have higher weight limits for the internal harness or other special features to help position the child.
- Many medical conditions such as Cerebral Palsy or prematurity may make using a conventional car seat difficult. Positioning may be affected by their muscle tone, breathing problems, or other life-threatening situations.
- Specialty vests allow older children to ride lying flat when medically required.

Some conditions resulting in special transportation needs may not be long-term or chronic. Children may have short-term or acute conditions such as a broken leg.

- Hip casts can affect children's ability to sit up. Special restraints may be necessary.
- Larger children in hip spica casts or full body casts who are unable to sit up might need modified vests.
- Caregivers should **NEVER** transport a child with special healthcare/medical needs on a reclined vehicle seat. Check the vehicle owner's manual for details.

[INSTRUCTOR NOTE]

[Refer participants to the Community Resources Tool you handed out earlier in the course for special needs resources.]

**Reference TG
page 7-9.**



Display PPT 7-23.



Review child behavior considerations.

Caregivers will often request your advice regarding actions they can take when driving a child with problem behavior.

- The behavior may be caused by a child's medical condition, such as autism or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). These behaviors may distract the driver making proper restraint use for everyone in the vehicle even more important.
- When the child's behavioral associated with a medical condition places him/her or others at risk because of car seat issues during travel, caregivers should be referred to the child's physician or a behavioral specialist **AND** to a CPS Technician with special training in safe transportation of children with special needs. They can then discuss the problem and possible options.
- Caregivers can also be referred to the child's school or doctor for help with behavioral issues.
- Some children with behavior issues may benefit from a car seat with a higher weight harness, a non-conventional seat, or vest.

Sometimes a child's behavior may be related to a developmental stage. They may not only resist a car seat but also temporarily resist going to bed at night or refuse certain foods.

[INSTRUCTOR NOTE]

[Emphasize that caution should be taken when discussing behavior issues with caregivers who may feel that their parenting abilities are being questioned.]



Ask question and respond to comments.

Q. What questions do you have about car seats for children with special needs?



**Reference TG
Page 7-8 and 7-9.**

[INSTRUCTOR NOTE]

[Point out the special needs resources identified in the TG.]



Conclude topic.

There are several additional resources that will provide you with more information on car seats for children with special needs. Review the resources listed in your TG after this training.

7. Progress Check and Summary



Reference TG
page 7-10.



Reinforce how to to explain best practices to caregivers.

There are key questions to answer related to car seats and booster seats.



Display PPT 7-24 and 7-25.

[INSTRUCTOR NOTE]

[Review the key questions related to car seats and booster seats.]



Introduce progress check.

Let's review what we learned in Module 7 through a discussion of best practices.

1. Take a few minutes to respond to the best practice questions.
2. Write down responses in your TG.

[INSTRUCTOR NOTE]

[Conduct the following progress check as a large group activity. Pose each question and ask for responses from the group. Add any information not provided by participants.]

The correct answers follow:

1. What is the best car seat or booster seat for a child?

Answer: The one that fits the child, fits the vehicle, and will be used correctly every time by the caregiver

2. How long should children ride in rear-facing car seats?

Answer: Children should remain in rear-facing car seats **AS LONG AS POSSIBLE**. It is the best way to keep them safe. The child should remain in a rear-facing car seat until he or she reaches the top height or weight limit allowed by the car seat manufacturer.

3. Why might a car seat or booster seat that is missing its product information label be dangerous to use?

Answer: Without a label, it is not possible to know whether the car seat or booster seat has been recalled.

4. Should a car seat or booster seat be replaced after a crash?

Answer: Car seats and booster seats are, in most cases, made to withstand one crash. Seat replacement, however, is **NOT ALWAYS** required. Always review NHTSA criteria for assessing crash severity and car seat replacement and check with the manufacturer for guidelines on when the product should be replaced.

5. What are some situations or conditions that may require the selection of specialized adaptive car seats?

Answer: Children in hip casts, who are small or born prematurely, or have breathing problems



Ask question and respond to comments.

Q. What remaining questions do you have about car seats and booster seats and your role in explaining best practices to caregivers?



Conclude module.

This module provided you with an introduction to car seats and booster seats. The next three modules will address the specifics of rear-facing and forward-facing car seats, booster seats, and seat belts.