



Kids in Safe Seats, Inc.

*The following news release is being distributed on behalf of the Newfoundland and Labrador Public Health Association, the Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association, Kids in Safe Seats, Inc., and the Association of Registered Nurses of Newfoundland and Labrador.*

### **Health groups call on government to legislate use of child booster seats**

**For immediate release – December 20, 2005**

The Newfoundland and Labrador Public Health Association (NLPHA) has partnered with the Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association (NLMA), Kids in Safe Seats (KISS), and the Association of Registered Nurses of Newfoundland and Labrador (ARNNL) to release a joint position paper: *Child Passenger Safety in Newfoundland and Labrador*.

The paper calls on government to take immediate actions to ensure the safe transportation of children in the province, including upgrading its current legislation to include and require booster seats for children between 40 and 80 lbs.

The groups also recommend that government:

- Develop and implement a province-wide health promotion program around the safe transportation of children under 12 years of age.
- Require mandatory child passenger safety certification by drivers professionally transporting children.
- Appropriately fund and dedicate resources to a multidisciplinary working group that consists of members from the public and private sectors with the objective of reducing injuries and fatalities of child passengers.
- Establish a lead agency within government, which is responsible and accountable for the implementation and ongoing evaluation of the aforementioned program, to reduce injury and death for child passengers.

NLPHA President Dr. Minnie Wasmeier said as passengers in motor vehicles, children under the age of 12 are particularly susceptible to serious injury and fatality. “There must be a restraint present in the vehicle and that restraint must be used correctly to be effective in preventing injury and death in a collision.”

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Dr. Wasmeier noted that children are not large enough to use the vehicle seat belt system safely until they are approximately nine years old and weigh at least 80 lbs. She added that a child's skeleton and musculature still necessitate that they be transported in the back seat of the vehicle until age 12, away from the front seat airbags and the point of impact.

“Child restraints such as infant carriers, car seats and booster seats have been proven to save lives and prevent serious injury,” said NLMA President Dr. Tom Costello.

“Statistics indicate that if children travel in a child restraint seat that is used correctly and is appropriate to their height, weight and development, they are 70 per cent less likely to suffer serious injuries and 90 per cent less likely to die in the event of a crash.”

Dr. Costello said, however, that while many parents know to use rear-facing infant carriers for babies and car seats for toddlers, many do not use booster seats for children aged five to nine. “Although overall seat belt use has increased in the last 10 years, less than 28 per cent of children between the ages of five and nine are currently being safely transported in a booster seat.”

Shelley Bauer of Kids in Safe Seats said requiring the use of booster seats through legislation will enhance protection for children in motor vehicles. “Safety seats for infants and small children riding in motor vehicles are one of the most successful auto safety innovations. They are designed to hold children in place during a crash or sudden stop and prevent the child from being ejected from the passenger compartment. These restraint systems are specifically tailored to a child's anatomy and designed to restrain a child without applying dangerous forces to vulnerable body regions. By contrast, the lap and shoulder belts that come with the vehicle are designed for bodies over five feet tall and 105 lbs, and are inappropriate for small children.”

“The effect of motor vehicle collision on children is a serious and costly issue. Properly restrained children, through the use of car and booster seats, coupled with a good health promotion program will reduce the likelihood of death or serious injury,” said ARNNL President Sandra MacDonald. “Our province's legislation on child restraints is out of date and no longer reflects ‘best practices’ as described by Transport Canada.

“We know parents and other caregivers look to the law to judge safe child restraint practices. Government needs to upgrade its legislation to ensure regulations guiding child passenger safety reflect current knowledge on the appropriate and safe use of restraints. Other provinces have moved in this direction. It is time for Newfoundland and Labrador to join them and improve our province's legislation for child passenger safety,” concluded MacDonald

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**NOTE TO EDITORS:**

The author of the position paper, Shelley Bauer, RN is available for media interviews today. She may be reached at (709) 738-0037.