

Safety Matters!

FAMILY EDITION

February 2020



KIDS IN CARS

Little Kids in Cars

Every day thousands of kids are driven to school by parents, guardians, siblings, other family members, or friends. School staff who work the student drop-off and pick-up lines at elementary, middle, and high schools often express concerns about seeing kids under the age of eight not properly secured in a child safety seat.

Because we want our little HCPS students to be safe, we are offering clarification according to Code of Virginia Chapter 10 Article 13, which states that child restraint devices are required for children through the age of seven until the eighth birthday. For safety seat resources, go to vdh.virginia.gov/child-passenger-safety/ to



get information including how Virginia residents can qualify for assistance to obtain a safety or booster seat for a child. If you need someone to assist with the installation of your seat, reach out to your School Re-

source Officer (SRO) or pull into a fire station.

As you already may be aware, it's your responsibility to secure the child you are transporting into the safety seat. Please don't expect or permit school staff to do this. Because of our concerns, we are asking for your help because studies show that child safety seats reduce fatal injury by 54% for toddlers ages one to four and 45% for children ages four to eight. Let's work together to keep our little ones safe!

Sources: Eryn King and Schuyler Henry's Presentation titled, Virginia Car Seat Safety Laws & Liability

Big Kids in Cars

It happens so fast, like a blink of an eye. One day you are securing your child in a safety seat, and before you know it, you are teaching them to drive! In between, you are deciding whether or not your middle school-age child should be a passenger in a car with a teen driver behind the wheel. When your child begins the high school years, you may be wondering if they can jump in a car with friends. Well, did you know that Virginia has a law that restricts the number of passengers?

Virginia law has restrictions on the number of passengers that may be in a vehicle with a teen driver. A driver under the age of 18 may only transport one passenger under the age of 21, unless accompanied by a licensed parent, or other adult acting in loco parentis in the passenger seat. After your teen driver has the license for one year, they may transport up to three passengers under the age of 21 to and from a school-sponsored activity; in the case of an emergency; and if a licensed driver 21 or older is in the front passenger seat. If your child has a learner's permit, they may not carry more than one

passenger under age 18. Passenger restrictions do not apply to family members. Did you know that there are also curfew restrictions for our teen drivers under the age of 18?

Virginia law prohibits teens from driving between midnight and 4:00 a.m. except when driving to or from a place of business where employed; to or from an activity that is sponsored by a school, civic, religious, or public organization; with a parent or other adult acting in loco parentis (in place of parent) who is sitting in the front passenger



seat; and in case of an emergency. Violations of either the curfew or passenger restrictions may result in the suspension of the driver's license.

So, can my 16-year-old driver transport two younger siblings to school? Yes, this is permitted because it's to school, and restrictions don't apply toward family members.

Can my 16-year-old driver pick up a younger sibling and two of their friends to bring them home, to our neighborhood, after getting back from a field trip? No. The one friend and one sibling are fine, but not the second friend. This would be permissible for a teen driver with a license for more than one year.

Can my teen under the age of 18 drive to and from "party all night" after prom or graduation? Yes, because it's a school-sponsored activity.

Safety Matters! is a newsletter created by the Office of School Safety & Emergency Management. We would like to hear from you about topics that you would find interesting. Please contact us at 652-3511 or by email.

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Adults in Cars: Please follow the traffic plan for your child's school, obey the speed limit, and never drop your child off where they must cross a street to get to school's entrance.