

Transporting Children

(Revised 07/01/22)

Policy

If Car Seats are Not Available

PCC Lending Car Seats

Alignment with SET

Policy

Legally, Child Welfare Services (CWS) staff are not to transport non-dependent children unless they have consent from a parent, a court order or exigency. With parental consent, staff are able to transport the non-dependent children if they are able to and in agreement, but it is not required. Parental consent can be in the form of verbal, written or signed statement but if verbal, it must be documented in CWS/CMS such as in a contact.

Sections 27360, 27360.5, 27360.6, and 27363 of California’s Vehicle Code govern the transportation of children in vehicles.

Under no circumstances will CWS staff transport a child in a vehicle without the child being properly secured. If a staff person must transport several children at the same time but there is not enough room in the vehicle to properly secure each child and/or if there are not enough car seats* to properly transport each child, then the staff must get assistance to transport the children.

NOTE: Only a trained staff member may install a car seat when staff are transporting youth.

*For purposes of this policy, “car seat” includes infant seats, car seats, and booster seats.

When transporting children, CWS staff must follow the law. The following table outlines the type of car seat/restraint required based on age and other criteria:

Child’s Age	Type of Car Seat/Restraint
Birth – 2 years	Children under 2 years of age shall ride in a rear-facing car seat unless the child weighs 40 or more pounds OR is 40 or more inches tall. The child shall be secured in a manner that complies with the height and weight limits specified by the manufacturer of the car seat. (California Vehicle Code Section 27360.)
under 8 years	Children under the age of 8 must be secured in a car seat or booster seat in the back seat. All children 8 years old or younger must ride in the rear seats of the vehicle, except for the following circumstances: <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ The vehicle has no rear seats○ Rear seats are side or rear facing. Child safety restraints must never be placed on side-facing vehicle seats○ The child restraint system cannot be properly installed in the rear seats○ Children under 7 occupy all the rear seats○ Medical reason written by the pediatrician.

Policy (cont.)

Child's Age	Type of Car Seat/Restraint
Over age 8	All children taller than 4' 9" are required to be restrained in a seat belt and it is strongly recommended that they ride in the back seat of the vehicle. NOTE: The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration strongly recommends that all children ride in the back seat of the vehicle until 13 years of age.

A child will not be transported in the front seat of a motor vehicle with an *active* passenger air bag if the child is in a rear-facing infant/car seat.

Booster Seats

California law does not address graduation time from a five point harness to a booster seat. In the interest of safety, do not rush to move a child into a booster seat before they're ready. Each time you "graduate" a child to the next seat, there's a reduction in the level of protection for the child. Keep a child in each stage for as long as possible.

A child is ready for a booster seat when they have outgrown the weight or height limit of their forward-facing harnesses, which is typically between 40 and 65 pounds. Read the forward-facing car seat's owner's manual to determine height and weight limits, and keep the child in a harnessed seat for as long as possible.

Children at this stage are not yet ready for adult safety belts and should use belt-positioning booster seats until they are at least 4'9" and between 8 and 12 years old. Safety belts are designed for 165-pound male adults.

All children and adults will be secured by a safety belt regardless of where they are sitting in a motor vehicle. When using a lap/shoulder belt, the lap portion must cross the hips or upper thighs and the shoulder portion must cross the chest in front of the occupant.

Information describing the requirements is available from the California Highway Patrol ([CHP](#)).

CWS staff will not leave a child unattended in a vehicle.

If Car Seats are Not Available

If a staff person in the field determines that it is necessary to transport one or more children under 8 years (or 4' 9") but does not have the required car seat(s), the staff person will call the supervisor and ask that someone bring the appropriate car seat(s) to him/her in the field.

If there are not enough car seats available in a region/office, the SW shall notify the PSS in writing. The PSS will evaluate the information and, if appropriate, forward it to his/her PSPM, who will notify Administrative Support Services to initiate an order to purchase additional car seats.

If Car Seats are Not Available (cont.)

It is the responsibility of regions/programs to monitor their car seats for:

- Inventory control
- Unusual wear that impacts the safety of the car seat, and
- Expiration dates.

Administrative Support Services has provided each region/program with an inventory control sheet for the purposes of monitoring and requests updated copies when placing orders for new car seats.

If a low/medium-income or refugee parent needs a car seat but cannot afford one, the parent may contact the [Pacific Safety Center](#) at 858-621-2313 x 114 on Wednesday or Thursday to request one. If car seats are available, the parent will be required to take a car seat safety class (offered throughout the county in English and Spanish). There is a limit of one car seat per family.

PCC Lending Car Seats

If a child is released from PCC to a parent or relative/NREFM, PCC staff will ask the parent or relative/NREFM if there is a car seat in the vehicle. If there is not, then a car seat may be borrowed from PCC if one is available. PCC will keep a record of families to whom car seats are lent and will advise parents or relatives/NREFMs that it is their responsibility to return the car seat to PCC.

Alignment with SET

This policy aligns with SET [Value 5](#) A Strong Working Relationship With the Legal System by ensuring child safety and adhering to the laws of the State of California and [Value 4](#) Shared Responsibility With Community Partners by working with community providers to offer resources to families in need.
