

# Washington State has two occupant protection laws... a seat belt law and a child restraint law

Washington's Child Restraint Law will change on June 1, 2007 to require:

- Children under 13 years old will be transported in the back seat where it is practical to do so.
- Children up to their 8th birthday, unless they are 4'9" tall (57 inches), will be transported in an appropriate child restraint system. (For example a child car seat, booster seat, vest, or other restraint that is federally approved for use in the car.)
- The restraint system must be used correctly according to the car seat AND vehicle manufacturer's instructions.
- Vehicles equipped with lap-only seat belts are exempt from the requirement to use a booster seat.

Children 8-years of age or at least 4'9" who wear a seat belt MUST use it correctly (never under the arm or behind the back) or continue to use a booster.

**The Seat Belt Law requires:**

- All vehicle occupants be **properly restrained** in all seating positions;
- The driver will be responsible for properly securing all children under the age of 16.
- Passengers 16 years of age and older be responsible for themselves. They may receive their own citation if they are not properly restrained.

**Buckling one seat belt around two people or placing the seat belt under the arm or behind the back is dangerous, can cause death or serious injury, and is a violation of the law.**

## Washington Child Restraint Law

On July 1, 2002, Washington's new Child Restraint Law went into effect. This law, also known as the Anton Skeen Act, is one of the strongest child restraint laws in the nation. It requires the use of booster seats for older children. In 2000, Washington was the first state in the nation to pass this type of law.

**Key provisions of the law:**

Children under the age of 16 years must be restrained in a vehicle according to the following steps:

- . 1 year of age or under or weighing less than 20 pounds:  
*a rear facing infant seat*
- . Between 1 - 4 years old or 20 - 40 pounds:  
*a forward facing child safety seat*

. Between 4 - 6 years old or 40 - 60 pounds:  
*a booster seat with a lap and shoulder belt*

. 6 years old or 60 pounds and greater:  
*a seatbelt or a booster seat with a lap and shoulder belt*

NOTE: Doctors and safety experts recommend that children ride in booster seats until the lap and shoulder belt fit right, usually when they are at least 4'9" tall, or around 8 years old or 80 pounds.

As of July 27, 2003, tickets cost \$101.00 for each improperly restrained child, including if the child safety seat harness is not buckled, or if the older child has put the shoulder belt behind his back.

Shoulder belts must be used with booster seats. If you do not have shoulder belts in your car, you are exempt from the requirements of the new law.

The law was the work of a bi-partisan legislative effort spurred on by a Walla Walla parent, Autumn Alexander Skeen.

Autumn lost her four-year-old son, Anton Skeen in a rollover collision. Anton was using a seat belt in accordance with state law at the time. Yet, because seat belts are built for adult bodies, he slid out of his seat belt and was thrown from the vehicle and crushed in the collision.