

NC 4-H/NC Cooperative Extension Youth Transportation Guidelines

North Carolina Cooperative Extension staff members and volunteers are required to follow all North Carolina General Statutes. This guideline specifically focuses upon following the requirements of G.S. 20-137.1 concerning child safety seat laws. The law requires that all children up to the age of eight (or weighing 80 pounds) ride in a properly installed child restraint device, such as a child restraint seat. If the child is between 40 and 80 pounds (regardless of age), s/he must ride in a belt positioning booster seat. If a child is 8 years of age or older, or weighs more than 80 pounds (regardless of age), s/he is required to ride in a secured, properly fitted seat belt. Placing the shoulder belt under a child's arm or behind the back is dangerous and illegal.

Many 15-passenger vans only have lap and shoulder belts on each end of the bench seats. This, then, is the only place that a child may sit in restraint or booster seating. Belt-positioning booster seats must never be used with just a lap belt as these seats, to be properly positioned, require the lap and shoulder belt restraints.

In vehicles where a rear seat is available for installation of restraint or booster seats, children must be rear seat passengers. If the vehicle has a passenger side air bag, children should not ride in the front passenger seat. If the child restraint device is designed for use with air bags, it may be installed in the front seat however NC Cooperative Extension discourages this practice.

North Carolina Cooperative Extension recommends:

If at all possible, parents/guardians should be responsible for transporting 5 to 8 year old participants to and from events, activities or programs.

Should it be necessary for Extension to provide transportation, the following guidelines should be followed:

- The parents/guardians must supply the child restraint or booster seats when the child is traveling as part of a 4-H/Extension program. Without proper child restraint/booster seats, Extension staff will not transport the child(ren).
- The parent/guardian or a trained adult, not Extension staff members, must install the child restraint/booster seat in the vehicle and ensure that the child is properly restrained prior to moving the vehicle.
- If the child is under the age of eight, the parent/guardian must provide a written statement attesting to the child's weight in order to have the child ride without restraint/booster seats.
- Children under the age of 12 must ride in rear seats wearing proper restraints; they should not ride in front seats, particularly when passenger side air bags are present.
- Children under the age of 12 should not ride in the middle seat of the front bench in a passenger van.

As a reminder, North Carolina law states that the driver is responsible for all children under the age of 16 years in the vehicle, and the driver will be charged if found in violation of the law.

Youth between the ages of 8 and 16 are required to follow the North Carolina Seat Belt Law which states that they are required to properly wear a seat belt when sitting in any moving vehicle.

NC Cooperative Extension staff members are encouraged to utilize state and county vehicles whenever possible in the conduct of official business.

