

Back to school with some new rules: New booster seat laws affect field trips with volunteer drivers

BC's child passenger laws now align with best practices and provide more protection to children in BC. Here, in plain language are the details of the new laws.

What are the new rules?

All drivers are responsible for complying with the child car seat requirements identified below.

Is your child / student

Under 9 years AND over 18 kg?

Booster seats are for children:

- Who are **at least 18 kg (40 lb.)**;
- Until they are **9 years of age** unless they have reached the **height of 145 cm (4'9")** tall.

This pamphlet answers the most commonly asked questions about how this new legislation affects travel on school field trips for students who meet the above criteria.

For complete details, go to
www.ChildSeatInfo.ca

or call the toll-free
Child Seat Info Line
1-877-247-5551

But what about students under 40 pounds?

BC law states that students under 40 pounds require a forward facing child car seat and harness. This type of seat requires installation into the vehicle. This installation includes the use of a tether.

As safe installation varies from car seat to car seat and vehicle to vehicle, best practice recommends that children under 40 pounds travel in a child car seat that has been safely installed and checked by their own parent.

About this document

This document has been prepared by BC Field Trips and the BCAA Traffic Safety Foundation and approved by the following organizations. Each of the organizations recognizes the value and importance of both learning in the community and a commitment to student safety.

This legislation is meant to help keep our students safe while traveling in passenger vehicles, not to impede access to community learning opportunities. Students and teachers can continue to **'take learning on the road'** and explore the rich educational experiences available in our communities!

Approving organizations:

- BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils
- BC Principals' and Vice Principals' Association
- BC School Trustees Association

bcp vpa

BCSTA
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School Trustees
Association

BCCPAC

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Frequently Asked Questions about booster seats and field trips

Who needs a booster seat?

Booster seats are for children:

- Who are **at least 18 kg (40 lb.)**;
- Until they are **9 years of age** unless they have reached the height of **145 cm (4'9")** tall.

Our family doesn't drive. Why does my child need a booster seat?

Even if your family doesn't drive, your child under nine years old or 4'9" now requires a booster seat to travel in **any passenger vehicle**. That means getting to soccer practice, to a friend's house after school and on field trips.

What is needed for safe use of a booster seat in a vehicle?

Safe placement of a low back booster seat requires:

- a lap and shoulder belt (not just a lap belt)
- a headrest

Children under 12 years of age should ride in rear seats.

What needs to change on the volunteer driver forms to accommodate this legislation?

Drivers should be asked how many places they have in their vehicle that meet the criteria for safe placement of booster seats. Drivers should be informed that they are responsible for complying with the legislation by ensuring that all children who need booster seats use them.

Who is responsible to determine if a student needs a booster seat?

Field trip notices requiring transportation in passenger vehicles should state the specific requirements for booster seats. Parents should identify on the notice if their child does / does not require a booster seat based on the requirements.

I thought booster seats need to be installed in a vehicle. Who is responsible for safely installing booster seats for field trips?

Most portable, low backed booster seats do not require installation into the vehicle. The booster seat is placed onto the seat of the car and secured using a lap and shoulder belt. These are the booster seats that are recommended for use on school field trips. Students secure their own seat belts. The seatbelt should fit over the hips and across the shoulder and chest. Never put a seatbelt under the arm or behind the back.

Do students require booster seats on school buses?

Child seats, booster seats and seat belts are not required in 'yellow and black' school buses. Students 9 years and under travelling in vans registered as school buses **do** require booster seats if the vehicle is under 10,000 GVW and has lap and shoulder belts and headrests. If you are uncertain about whether booster seats are required in a specific vehicle, please contact the car seat info line.

What if students don't have or forget their booster seats on field trip day?

Parents should identify whether or not their child will bring a portable, low backed booster seat that does not require installation for field trips. For students who do not have or who forget their seats, it is recommended that each school have a small supply (6-8 seats) of portable, low backed booster seats available to be shared amongst the primary classes.

Do schools need to buy a class set of booster seats? Where will we store them?

6-8 portable, low back booster seats should be adequate for most schools. Choose one brand and style of seat for your purchase. This number of booster seats requires the equivalent space of two boxes of photocopier paper for storage.

But aren't booster seats expensive?

Portable, low backed booster seats that are Canadian Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (CMVSS) approved are available for under \$30. Talk with your local retailers about your needs to secure the best possible pricing.

Can we ask for donations of used seats for our school?

Donated used seats are not recommended for schools due to their unknown crash history. It is safer for schools to purchase new seats of a single brand at one time so everyone knows the history and age of the seats. Seats also have expiry dates. Refer to manufacturers' instructions.

How can Parent Advisory Councils help to make booster seats available for all students?

School PAC's are able to use their Direct Access Grant monies (i.e. gaming funds) to purchase booster seats, as they have been deemed an eligible use of gaming funds by the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General.