

REGION 11 CHILD PASSENGER SAFETY PROGRAM

Introduction

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of injury and death for children in the United States. The majority of children are improperly restrained in the vehicle, and many caregivers are confused about proper installation of car seats and do not know where to turn for resources. In addition, many families lack the financial means to purchase an appropriate car seat for their child(ren). Nationally certified child passenger safety technicians can assist families, agencies, and individuals with motor vehicle safety.

Washington State Region 11

In Washington state we are fortunate to have statewide coordination of child passenger safety efforts through the Washington Traffic Safety Commission. As with many statewide programs, the child passenger safety (CPS) program is divided into regions. Region 11 consists of Whatcom, Skagit, Island, and San Juan counties. Snohomish County is its own region, and Region 11 and Snohomish County work closely together. Each region has a coordinator who is responsible for tracking child passenger safety technician certifications, passing on information from national and state sources to all technicians and advocates, promoting the CPS program, and functioning as a resource for technicians and families. There is also a state coordinator who oversees the regional coordinators and provides information and financial resources to each region. Currently the Washington state coordinator is Cesi Velez, and the Region 11 Coordinator is Erica Littlewood. Funding for many of the CPS initiatives and efforts is supplied by the Washington Traffic Safety Commission.

Child Passenger Safety Technicians and Safe Kids Coalitions

Typically, a CPS region consists of a coordinator and several child passenger safety technicians (CPSTs). The designation of “child passenger safety technician” is a national certification, which is issued following completion of a 24 to 32-hour training course. The training curriculum is overseen by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), and certification is administered by Safe Kids Worldwide. The mission of Safe Kids Worldwide is to develop and support programs to prevent injuries and injury death in children under the age of 18. Child passenger safety activities are often supported by local Safe Kids coalitions.

In Region 11, Safe Kids Northwest is the Safe Kids coalition, and Safe Kids Snohomish County is the coalition to the south. The current lead agency for Safe Kids Northwest is North Region EMS and Trauma Care Council, which is also the fiscal agent for the child passenger safety program.

Child Passenger Safety Program Areas

Activities for a child passenger safety technician team might include: Meeting with individuals or families to provide education about proper restraint of their child(ren); providing information and answering questions for the community through in-person meetings, social media, print media, radio interviews, email and phone; conducting trainings for community groups and agencies (e.g., parent groups, service clubs, hospitals, physicians' offices, government agencies, nonprofit organizations); participating in safety fairs for the public and at workplaces with information about child passenger safety; assisting fire/EMS and law enforcement first responders with training; and many other activities.

Another large program area is donation of car seats for families without the means to purchase an appropriate car seat. In Whatcom County, a Rotary grant provides for car seat purchases; in Skagit County, a Kiwanis grant and the Help Me Grow Skagit provide for car seat purchases; in San Juan County, San Juan EMS purchases seats for distribution; and in Snohomish County, a variety of grants and other funding covers the purchase of seats; there is no funding program in Island County at this time. Car seats can also be purchased with injury prevention grants from Washington state administered by North Region EMS and Trauma Care Council (Whatcom, Skagit, San Juan, Island and Snohomish counties). The state CPS program can also supply funding for car seats.

Future Child Passenger Safety Program Areas

Possible areas for growth of the CPS program in the North Sound region:

- Closer connections with CCAs
- Training more child passenger safety technicians in key areas (hospitals, law enforcement, fire/EMS, underserved geographical regions, tribal communities)
- Identification of funding sources
- Greater collaboration with tribal communities
- Partnership with CP-MIH programs
- Additional outreach and administrative support: Social media presence, Google Forms for requests, reporting