

Iowa Seat Belt Law Guide*

(Iowa Code 321.445)

Key Points:

- Law Applies to all front seat occupants.
- Rear seat occupants up to the age of 18
- Vehicle must be in forward motion.
- Applies to both Iowa and out-of-state vehicles
- Belt systems must be used properly:
 - Belt across lap, not stomach
 - Strap over shoulder, not under arm.
- Belts must be present:
 - As provided by manufacturer;
 - Not removed or disconnected.
- Failure to use is probable cause to stop a vehicle:
 - An officer may investigate a suspected violation.
- Driver and passengers may be cited separately.
 - Misdemeanor fine is \$50.00 plus costs.
 - Conviction is logged on driver's record, but does not count toward license suspension.

Exceptions:

- Motor vehicles manufactured before 1966
- Vehicles being used by people for work requiring them to get in and out of vehicle frequently, provided they don't exceed 25 mph between stops
- Rural letter carriers making deliveries
- Passengers on a bus
- People with a DOT-exemption from signed by a doctor stating reason for non-use and expiration date
- Passengers (not drivers) in emergency vehicles during an emergency trip
- Vans, trucks, buses and multi-purpose vehicles manufactured before 1972
- People in the front seat of motor vehicles primarily used by handicapped people who utilize collapsible wheelchairs

A GUIDE TO THE IOWA CHILD RESTRAINT LAW

Iowa Code 321.446, Data Code 198a - as of July 2010

Key Points:

- A child under 1 year old and weighing less than 20 lbs. must be secured in a rear-facing child restraint system
- A child age 1 up to 6 years old must be secured in a child restraint system (a safety seat or booster seat-- NOT a seat belt)
- A child from age 6 up to age 11 must be secured in a child restraint system or by a safety belt
- Rear seat occupants up to age 18 must be secured by a safety belt

A “child restraint system” is a specially designed seating system, including a belt positioning seat or a booster seat that meets federal motor vehicle safety standards.

- The misdemeanor fine is \$100.00, plus costs (non-moving violation) totaling at least \$195.00
- The law applies to both residents and non-residents of Iowa
- The child restraint system must be used in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions
- The child must be secured in the child restraint and the child restraint must be properly secured to the vehicle
- Non-use of a child restraint is probable cause to stop a vehicle
- An officer may investigate a suspected violation
- For unrestrained passengers age 0-13, the driver receives the citation, and for unrestrained passengers 14-17, the passenger receives the citation
- **1st offense citation will not result in conviction if driver “produces in court” proof of acquisition of child restraint**

Exceptions:

- Children certified by a physician as having a medical, physical or mental disability making restraint use inadvisable
- Children on bus, including a school bus
- Children riding on motorcycles
- Children riding in vehicles manufactured before 1966
- Children transported in authorized emergency vehicles
- Children transported by peace officers on official duty
- Children riding in motor homes except if riding in the front passenger seat (where they must be restrained)
- Children for whom a seat belt is not available due to all other belts being used (example: 4th child in back seat with only 3 belts)

This is only a guide, provided through the courtesy of

**Iowa Governor’s Traffic Safety Bureau
Department of Public Safety**

Produced with Federal Highway Safety Funds 07/10 10M

A GUIDE TO SAFELY TRANSPORTING CHILDREN IN A MOVING VEHICLE

COMMON CHILD SAFETY SEAT MISUSES:

- Seat installed too loose
- Improper seating position (in front of an air bag)
- Not buckling child into restraint
- Not securely anchoring the child restraint to the vehicle
- Improper seat for child's age and size
- Infant riding forward facing
- Harness retainer clip not at armpit level
- Loose harness straps

To graduate to an adult belt -- a child must be able to sit with their back/buttocks against the seat and with their knees bent at the edge of the seat. The belt system must be snug across the center of the child's chest and across their lap at the hips.

NATIONALLY RECOMMENDED STANDARDS FOR SAFE USE OF CHILD RESTRAINT SYSTEMS

	INFANTS	TODDLER/ PRESCHOOL	YOUNG CHILDREN
Weight	Birth to 1 year Up to 20-22 lbs.	Over 1 year 20-40 lbs.	Over 40 lbs. up to about 80 lbs. and 4'9" tall
Type of Seat	Infant only or rear-facing convertible	Convertible or Forward-facing	Belt positioning booster seat
Seat Position	Rear-facing only	Forward-facing	Forward-facing
<u>Always</u> <u>Make</u> <u>Sure</u>	Children to one year AND at least 20 lbs. in rear- facing seats Harness straps at or below shoulder level	Harness straps should be at or above shoulders Most seats require top slot for forward facing	Belt positioning booster seats must be used with both lap AND shoulder belt
WARNING	Do not place infants in the front passenger seat of cars with air bags	All children under age 13 should ride in the back seat	Make sure the lap belt fits low and tight to avoid abdominal injuries

For further information on child restraints, contact the
Iowa Child Passenger Safety Helpline
1-800-258-6419