

# Don't Leave the Rear Seat

# BEHIND



## *Prioritizing for Child Passengers*

The primary occupants of the rear seat of passenger vehicles are children. In fact, 70 percent of rear seat occupants are children

younger than 14 years. Children under age 16 spend nearly as much time in motor vehicles as adults, averaging 3.4 trips per day and 45 to 50 minutes in duration. Today's kids spend more time being transported in passenger vehicles than previous generations and merit equal consideration when enhancing vehicle safety for occupants.

Even though vehicles and occupant behaviors have generally become safer and fewer children are dying in crashes than a decade ago, there is still an unacceptable number of our young dying in crashes — 952 deaths among children ages 15 and younger in 2010.

There is great opportunity for the United States to further reduce child occupant injury and death by focusing on rear seat safety design. Based on our review of data and available research, experts from The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia's Center for Injury Research and Prevention recommend the following prioritization for policymakers within government and industry.

### **Get rear seat occupants restrained appropriately for their age and size.**

To do this:

- Explore effectiveness of rear seat belt reminder systems.
- Explore effectiveness of interventions designed to increase rear seat vehicle belt use for tweens, teens and adults.
- Close gaps in state laws to mandate restraint use for all occupants, including rear seat occupants, with primary enforcement.

### **Bring advanced restraint design to the rear seat.**

To do this:

- Develop regulatory procedures or vehicle performance programs for consumers that dynamically evaluate the protection of rear seat occupants including the likelihood of contact with the vehicle structures in front of them.
- Develop engineering strategies to reduce rear occupant injury due to intrusion in side impacts.
- Incorporate improvements in rear seat geometry along with advancements in restraint design.

### **Conduct immediate research to inform these priorities.**

To do this:

- Design and evaluate customizable vehicle restraints that can provide protection to the 6-year-old ATD, 10-year-old ATD and 50th percentile male ATD.
- Collect contemporary data on rear seat restraint practices and injury risk in the current fleet and current child occupants.
- Determine how children's posture and position in restraints, as observed in a naturalistic setting, affect injury risk.

