

Safer Journeys with Kids

Community Car Seat Rental Schemes: Here to help



For the past two and a half years, Christine Chaplow has been putting on a show that has filled empty seats by the hundreds in the Waitomo and Otorohanga Districts. No, she doesn't operate a cinema or run a theatre company. Christine is a Wintec road safety coordinator who helps families gain access to child car seats and booster seats.

With community support, Christine's KC (King Country) Kids car seat rental service has provided over 133 child car restraints, mostly to low income families. "Our goal is to afford every child in our community with the protection they need on the road," Christine said.

Same goes for Simone Budel, Car Seat Rental and Services Manager at Waitemata Plunket. Her team has helped thousands of families in the region, either hiring out or installing child car seats correctly. Their goal is to do everything they can to ensure that "no family will walk out of our doors without a seat if they need one," she said.

Ann Weaver, Director of Safekids, said there is now a wide range of services that can help families get access to child car restraints for their children. "There are car seat rental schemes across the country which hires out baby capsules and toddler seats for as low as 80 Cents to \$3 a week."

Booster seats for school age kids, which are more cost effective to buy than rent because of their expected life span of about 7 years (i.e. up to a child's age of 12, or until they are 148cm tall), can be bought from retailers and car rental schemes starting from as low as \$50.

"Top of the line models can provide extra safety features and comfort, but even the most basic booster seat offers excellent protection," Ms. Weaver said.

Studies show that Booster Seats can reduce the risk of serious and life-threatening injuries to 5 to 9 year old children by 52%. "Booster seats raises a child's sitting height, making sure the shoulder strap and lap belt are correctly and safely positioned on a child," said Dr. Liz Segedin of Starship's Paediatric Intensive Care Unit.

"Seatbelts in cars are designed to fit adults, not kids. When kids use a seatbelt that doesn't fit them properly, they risk severe head, spine and abdominal injury in a crash," Dr. Segedin added.

With affordable options and proven safety benefits, Safekids and its' partners urge families who feel they are not financially capable of buying child car seats and booster seats, to look for these services.

"These community groups are here to help you, and are run by passionate people who only have one thing in their mind: To provide the very best protection to your child when they travel on the road," Ann said.

(Continued.)



Tips when getting child car restraints and booster seats:

- ✓ **Hire it.** Child Car Seat Rental Services operate across the country, with some hiring out car seats for as low as 80 Cents a week. Find out what services are available to you by contacting a Road Safety Coordinator through your local council, Maori/Pacific health provider or Plunket.

- ✓ **Ask for help.** Check with WINZ if you qualify for a Special Needs Grant to buy or hire a child car seat. Some community groups and Trusts also provide car restraints to low income families for free or at a fraction of the cost.

- ✓ **Buy it.** There is a child restraint for any budget, however it is important to check if:
 - The child restraint meets an approved standard (NZ, Australia, Europe or US);
 - The car seat is appropriate for your child (ALWAYS read the user manual);
 - The car seat is suitable for your car (try it in your car before you buy it. Not all restraints fit all vehicles).

- ✓ **Beware of second-hand car seats.** Second-hand child car seats may not comply with safety standards, or they may have been in a crash. They may have missing parts or may be expired. If you have a second hand car seat, take it to your local car seat rental scheme to have it checked for free.

For tips and information on keeping kids safe on the road, at home and at play, visit www.safekids.org.nz.

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About Safekids New Zealand

Safekids New Zealand is the injury prevention service of Starship Children's Health and a member of Safe Kids Worldwide. Our mission is to reduce the incidence and severity of unintentional injuries to New Zealand's children aged 0 - 14 years.

For more information, contact Anthony Rola at anthonyr@adhb.govt.nz, or visit www.safekids.org.nz or call 09 631 0717.