

BUILDING A COMMUNITY COALITION FOR YOUR CAMPAIGN

Our community coalition has been the heart of Washington’s booster seat campaign. Formed in 1999, the Washington State Booster Seat Coalition organized key interests and efforts. Coalition members made decisions about the campaign based on input from those who work everyday with families, who are traffic safety experts, and who are parents themselves. It was a key ingredient of our booster seat program’s success.

WHY USE A COMMUNITY COALITION?

A booster seat coalition will help you develop a program in the community working with local partners. This structure creates joint ownership of the campaign and helps encourage participation, momentum, and sustainability. Each of the coalition members contributes to campaign planning and development. This involvement helps encourage continued participation and commitment to booster seat activities, and establishes a network that can continue in the long-term. The end result is a campaign more likely to achieve your ultimate goal: increasing booster seat use!

One of the most practical reasons for setting up a local booster seat coalition is cost. A booster seat education campaign can be expensive. A coalition is a cost-effective way to reach the public. By tapping into the existing communication networks of your coalition members, you can extend the reach of your message by supporting a project coordinator who works with members, facilitates information sharing, and organizes meetings.

A booster seat coalition can also help pool resources, turning a small project budget into a significantly larger one. Each coalition member can contribute to a piece of the project instead of having one organization bear the cost burden. For a Washington State Booster Seat Coalition seat check event, for example, one partner arranged the location, another provided advertising funds, and another provided the seats and volunteer experts to implement the program. Given that some funding sources provide only small mini-grants, a coalition can help you stretch your dollars.

A booster seat coalition can also deliver messages more effectively. Existing community organizations will have established contacts and systems for reaching your audience. These organizations may already have credibility in the community which may make families more receptive to your message. The organizations you bring together are likely to have years of experience working with families, educating about traffic safety, or advising parents about children’s health.

Coalitions can be successful at reducing injury risk in your community. Research has shown that broad-based community coalitions have successfully increased children’s bicycle helmet use, increased life jacket use, and increased the use of

safe storage boxes for guns. Our booster seat observations showed that our campaign, which included a broad-based coalition, significantly increased the use of booster seats.¹

Finally, a booster seat coalition elevates the issue for the community and demonstrates its importance. By forming a separate entity focused on booster seats, you communicate that booster seats deserve attention.

HOW TO RUN A SUCCESSFUL COALITION

Creating a community coalition takes considerable effort, as does maintaining enthusiasm over the course of the campaign. Here is a checklist to follow when forming a coalition:

- ❑ ***Make a list of community resources that are already working on child passenger safety issues.*** This list may include the State Office of Highway Safety, police, fire, and EMS agencies, hospitals and public health departments, insurance companies, and non-profit organizations like SAFE KIDS, and traffic safety advocacy organizations like AAA.

Find out how these organizations educate the public about child passenger safety and what existing program activities may be incorporated into a booster seat campaign. For example, the Washington campaign used the local expertise of its Child Passenger Safety Teams – county-based police officers, firefighters, and other volunteer safety advocates who were trained by the Governor’s Office of Highway Safety to help teach families about car safety for children and provide seats to those in need.

- ❑ ***Make a list of other organizations that are key stakeholders in the community who may be interested in this work or who may be important to have as a part of the Coalition.*** These organizations may include media, private businesses who serve families, child care providers, or political leaders. Your list should be comprehensive and broad. Members will vary in how actively involved they are.
- ❑ ***To help recruit coalition members, find out how a lack of booster seats has impacted your community.*** Ask your Office of Highway Safety for data on motor vehicle crashes involving children and on safety restraint use. How many of the children involved would have been saved or injured less severely if they had been riding in booster

seats? How many children currently use booster seats? Compare these statistics to national data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

If possible, collect data on use of seat belts, car seat, and booster seats in the community. This data will help to solicit funding, recruit coalition members, and measure program effectiveness. (See the Program Evaluation section on page XX for information on how to collect this data.)

Also, find out if there are groups at highest risk of injury, who could be the focus of a “targeted” injury prevention campaign. In Washington, as booster seat use increased, we moved to identify high-risk groups, such as Latino families, in order to target our prevention efforts with specific strategies to meet their needs.

- ***Look at existing laws and policies regarding booster seat use and determine if they need to be updated.*** All states in the U.S. have a child passenger restraint law, but each one has different requirements. Find out: What is the law in your state? Up to what age are children required to ride in car seats or booster seats? What is the penalty if you violate the law?

On the local level, find out what policies exist in your county or city. While it is less common for counties and cities to have child passenger safety laws, it is possible for local governments to do so. If you are unable to pass a law through your state legislature that meets your community needs, you may find success on a local level. The Washington State Booster Seat Coalition did not pursue local governments during its campaign because of the state law, but local governments have passed laws or implemented policies to protect children from injuries (e.g., local bicycle helmet ordinances, tribal passenger safety laws).

The policies of local health departments and area hospitals may vary. Find out which organizations currently provide seats to families or help parents install seats in their cars. Are there organizations interested in developing such a program? During our campaign in Washington, some organizations were unable to check or give away seats due to concerns about liability or a lack of resources. While

For information on state child passenger safety laws, go to:

www.saferoads.org
www.statehighwaysafety.org
www.safekids.org
www.iihs.org
www.nhtsa.gov

seat distribution by the King County Health Department and EMS office was limited by liability concerns, many area hospitals had car seat and booster seat education and fitting programs in place.

- ❑ ***Talk with community resources about their experiences with parents, children, and cars.*** Are children buckled up in booster seats? What do parents know about them? How do parents and children feel about using booster seats? What are the biggest barriers that the parents face in using these seats? What is needed to make change in the community?

These initial conversations can help you understand community needs and the environment in which the campaign will operate. These conversations also help build bridges for the future.

- ❑ ***Form a steering committee.*** Bring together 6-8 representatives of key stakeholder organizations who can help guide decision-making and provide expert advice.
- ❑ ***Set a time/date for the first coalition meeting and send out invitations and meeting agendas.*** Have food available. We found attendance improved at meetings when food was available. Follow up invitations with phone calls and an email reminder.
- ❑ ***At the first meeting, present the problem and discuss possible approaches to increase booster seat use.*** Develop a task list and timeline.
- ❑ ***Identify the role that each member will play in the campaign.*** Ask each member to do tasks appropriate for their job titles and skills – people are more willing to help when it can be integrated into their daily duties, or when it furthers the mission of their organization.
- ❑ ***Set a time/date for the next meeting. Follow up with thanks and meeting minutes with future tasks noted.***

- ❑ **Follow up with coalition members about their new tasks, and provide information and encouragement.** Connect them to other resources in the network if needed. Thank them again for their help and share their accomplishments with the group.

Tips for keeping your coalition running in the later stages of the campaign:

- As new projects or new news develops from the campaign, update coalition members.
- Continue to solicit member input on projects. Invite them to sit on sub-committees or ask for their feedback on a campaign message or educational material.
- Ask different coalition members to present at upcoming meetings.
- Invite outside speakers if possible, to help further knowledge as well as partnerships.
- **THANK EVERYONE AND RECOGNIZE THEM FOR THEIR WORK!!!**

POTENTIAL MEMBERS OF A COALITION

Traffic safety organizations

- Police departments
- Governor’s Office of Highway Safety
- Non-profit traffic safety advocates

Healthcare providers

- Pediatricians and family medicine doctors
- Pediatric and trauma nurses
- Hospitals and community clinics
- Health educators
- Community relations staff
- Emergency medical services

Public health agency staff

- Injury prevention educators
- Public health nurses
- Child-care program staff

Childcare providers and organizations that provide resources to childcares

- Licensed child-care centers
- Home day cares
- Child care licensing
- Oversight and training organizations
- Family educators at community colleges

Schools

Pre-school and elementary school programs
Headstart programs and afterschool programs
PTAs
School district nurses

Non-profit organizations focused on children's health or family safety

SAFE KIDS Coalition
Injury Free Coalition for Kids
Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies

Private businesses with an interest in children or families—

Auto insurance companies
Children's product manufacturers or retailers
Car dealerships

Media**Parenting groups**

PARTIAL MEMBER LIST OF THE WASHINGTON STATE BOOSTER SEAT COALITION

American Response Ambulance
Bellevue Community College
Bellevue School District
Car Safe Kids
Childcare Resources and Referral
Children’s Hospital and Regional Medical Center
Evenflo Corporation
Grays Harbor County Traffic Safety and Injury Prevention
Harborview Hospital Family Patient Resource Center
Harborview Injury Prevention and Research Center
Highline Community Hospital
Kent Police Department
KOMO-TV (ABC)
Mary Bridge Hospital Center for Childhood Safety
Mercer Island Fire, Police & Public Safety
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration – Region X
Overlake Hospital
Public Health – Seattle-King County
Safe Ride News
SAFE KIDS Coalitions throughout Washington
Safety Restraint Coalition
Shoreline Children’s Center
Shoreline Community College
Snohomish County Sheriff’s Office
Snohomish County Health District
State Farm Insurance
Washington State Department of Health
Washington State Patrol
Washington Traffic Safety Commission