# INTRODUCTION

In recent decades we have come to realize that injuries – the most common cause of death to children – are often preventable. The most effective prevention methods involve addressing a specific problem with a specific solution, and using modern techniques of health education to bring about behavior change through community campaigns and intervention programs.

In the state of Washington, a group of individuals and agencies developed and implemented the Washington State Booster Seat Coalition to decrease deaths and injuries to children riding in cars. We sought to accomplish this by promoting booster seat use among 4- to 8-year-old children, the group most likely to be improperly restrained.[1, 2]

Using a wide variety of venues and educational media, we worked to educate the community about the need for booster seats and created programs to help families overcome financial barriers. In 1999 we formed a broad-based community coalition to advise and implement the campaign. This coalition built upon the successful car-seat training programs instituted by the Washington Traffic Safety Commission and the Washington Safety Restraint Coalition, and focused exclusively on booster seat use. The coalition's formation was followed by the passage of Washington's landmark Anton Skeen Act in 2000, the first state booster seat law in the nation. Following the law's implementation in 2002, the Washington State Booster Seat Coalition continued to work with the Washington Traffic Safety Commission on a booster seat campaign.

Our evaluation of the campaign through observations of booster seat use in King County, the most populous county in the state, demonstrated that we were able to increase booster seat use from 13 percent in 1999 to 57 percent in 2003.[3]

The purpose of this manual is to help others learn from our experience in improving motor vehicle safety for children, and adapt our model to the needs of their communities. Well-done interventions can make a difference. We hope that this manual will show you how.

BOOSTER SEATS