

# CHOOSING A CAMPAIGN MESSAGE

Campaign messages will play an important part in your efforts to educate the public about booster seats. These messages communicate the behavior you are encouraging (such as buckling up 4-8 year-olds in booster seats), as well as explaining why the behavior is important (e.g., booster seats are safer than adult seat belts alone). Depending on your specific communication, the campaign messages may also include additional information that supports your main message (e.g., booster seats are only a \$20-25 investment). There are many messages that you can communicate, and you may choose different ones for specific audiences or at various stages of your campaign.

Key campaign messages should be driven by your focus group results. Use your initial information about parent attitudes and barriers to determine which messages will influence them to buckle their child in a booster seat. Then, test these messages through focus groups or surveys to determine which ones are most important and most effective for meeting your campaign goals.

## **DETERMINING YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE**

Your target audience will depend upon your campaign objectives and strategy. The campaign objective may be to increase booster seat use among parents of a certain ethnic or socioeconomic background. Alternatively, empowering community organizations and healthcare providers to educate the families they serve may be your objective.

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Most likely the campaign will target those who provide daily care to children and who make decisions about how they ride in the car. In this case you will be educating parents and other family caregivers or guardians.

You may also decide to reach families through healthcare or child-care providers – those who influence parents. Doctors, nurses, and emergency medical staff are good spokespeople for booster seats according to our focus group research. At a child’s annual checkup as well as during periodic visits throughout the year, healthcare providers can advise parents on how to keep kids safe in the car with booster seats.

Child-care directors and teachers are also powerful messengers because they have daily contact with families and watch children grow through the different stages of child passenger safety. Child-care providers often have the responsibility of transporting children themselves, so providing them with information about booster seats will help protect children when they are not in the care of their parents.

- POTENTIAL TARGET AUDIENCES FOR A BOOSTER SEAT CAMPAIGN:**
- Parents and guardians
  - Childcare Directors and Staff
  - Public Health and Healthcare Providers
  - Elementary School Teachers and School Officials
  - Parenting organizations

**CREATING THE MESSAGE YOU NEED**

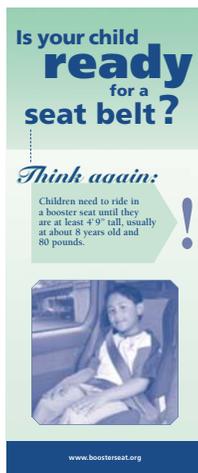
Use information from focus group, observations, or survey research, national child and traffic safety organizations, and conversations with community and campaign coalition members to create your messages.

**Choosing the Behavior to Highlight in Your Message**

Information about how people are buckling up children ages four and older will help you determine what behavior to target. For example, families who are moving their children directly from car seats to adult seat belts will need to learn that booster seats are the proper stage after car seats. On the other hand, families who already use booster seats, but use them only on long trips or while highway driving, should learn that booster seats are needed on every ride, even for short distances.

In the Washington campaign, our initial messages focused on using booster seats before seat belts:

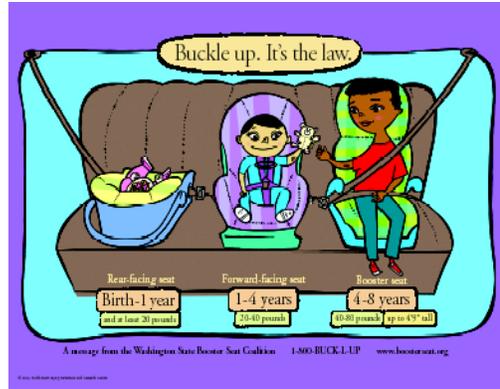
**Is Your Child Ready for a Seat Belt? Think Again!**



**Let Them Go Through Stages, Not Glass**



As booster seat use increased, we used other messages to address information gaps and to motivate parents to protect their children in the car with booster seats. We created messages for families who would be motivated by the law, or only used booster seats on long trips, and messages for those who did not use booster seats at all.



**Buckle Up! It's the Law**

**Use Booster Seats Every Ride, Every Time**

**BIG KIDS NEED BOOSTER SEATS**

4-8 years

40-80 pounds up to 4'9" tall

Keep big kids safe in the car — use booster seats on every ride, every time. It's the law. And your child is worth it.

\*\*\* This information is not sponsored by the school district. In consideration for the privilege to distribute the attached materials, the school district shall be held harmless from any cause of action, claim or petition filed in any court or administrative tribunal arising out of the distribution of these materials, including all costs, attorney's fees, and judgments or awards.\*\*\*

SEAT BELT DOES NOT FIT

Shoulder belt rubs face

Hard to sit up straight

Lap belt rides up on tummy

Knees do not bend unless child slouches

SEAT BELT FITS WITH BOOSTER SEAT

Can sit up straight

Knees bend

Lap belt stays across hips

Shoulder belt crosses shoulder

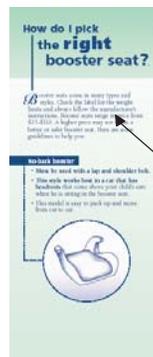
For more information and booster seat coupons, visit [www.boosterseat.org](http://www.boosterseat.org) or call 1-800-BUCK-L-UP (1-800-282-5587).

A message from the Washington State Booster Seat Coalition © 2010 Motor Vehicle Injury Prevention and Research Center

### Choosing a Message to Help Address Barriers to Booster Seat Use

Information about barriers and motivators to booster seat use will help you determine messages that address barriers that your campaign needs to overcome. For example, our focus group research showed that the majority of parents believed that 4-8 year-old children were safe to ride in adult seat belts and were too old or too big to ride in a safety seat. So, for the Washington campaign, we knew that we needed a message that addressed this belief. We chose “Is Your Child Ready for a Seat Belt? Think Again!” to let parents know that children do not always fit right in an adult seat belt.

Similarly, we learned that parents believe that booster seats are very expensive, costing \$80-100. So, we included information about inexpensive booster seats in our campaign messages as well as a message about a discount coupon program that we had set up.



Booster seats range in price from \$15-\$110. A higher price may not mean a better or safer booster seat.

### Choosing the Size Range that Your Message Recommends

Information from national child passenger safety organizations and from your state booster seat law will help you determine the age or size range that your message recommends. Both the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) provide recommended standards. Currently, booster seats are recommended for children over 40 pounds and under 4'9" tall. We found that most parents did not readily know their child's height, so we focused on weight and age criteria in our recommendation.

In Washington, we began our campaign recommending booster seats for children between 4-8 years old or 40-80 pounds – the AAP and NHTSA standard in 2000. At the time, this standard differed from our new state law that required booster seats for 4-6 year-old or 40-60 pound children beginning July 1, 2002. The Booster Seat Coalition chose to promote the higher standard because we believed it was a safer public health recommendation.

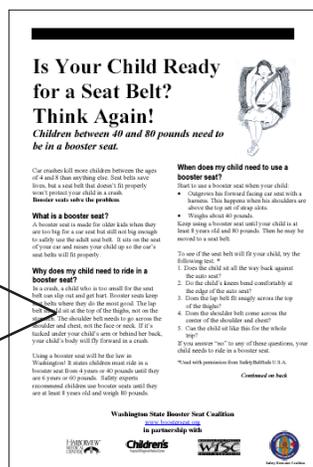
During the summer of 2002, when Washington's Anton Skeen Act officially took effect, we emphasized a message to reflect the law:

#### Booster Seats Required by Law. Kids 4-6 Years or 40-60 Pounds.



During this time we nstill kept our public health recommendation in the message, but it became a submessage:

Doctors and safety experts recommend that children use booster seats until the seat belt fits, typically when they are around 8 years old, about 80 pounds, and at least 4'9" tall.



In 2002 we also added the upper limit height standard of 4'9" to our message because AAP and NHTSA updated their recommendations during that year. However, for shorter communications such as radio ads when we needed to keep our message simple, we did not include height in our message recommendation. Our focus group and observational data showed that parents did not readily know their child's height, so the 4'9" tall standard was not as useful.<sup>2</sup> Research showed that parents do indeed know their child's weight,<sup>2</sup> so campaign communications focused on age or weight.

**Choosing Your Message Appeal**

Information about your audience's motivation for using booster seats can help you determine the type of message appeal that you use. From your research and interviews with community members, you will know if parents and caregivers think booster seats are important, how likely they are to use them, and what would encourage them. You will also learn if your audience is motivated to act out of fear of a ticket or fine, loss of life, or out of a desire to do the best for their children. Share your message with others who have led safety campaigns in the community to get their feedback.

In Washington's campaign, our initial messages were designed to attract parents' attention since many did not know about booster seats or did not believe that they were important to use. Some of our messages utilized a "fear appeal" in an effort to show parents the consequences of not using a booster seat.

**It's Easier to Put Your Child in This [booster seat].... Than This [ambulance]**



**And You Think This Seat is a Hassle?**

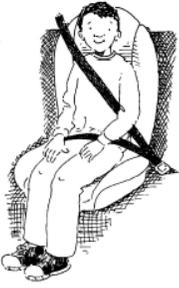


**Is Your Child Ready for a Seat Belt? Think Again!**

Seat belts save lives, but they are made for adults. Booster seats solve the problem. They make the lap and shoulder belt fit correctly. As of July 1, a **new law** requires that children from 4 to 6 years old or 40 to 60 pounds ride in car booster seats. Doctors and safety experts recommend booster seats until the seat belt fits. This typically occurs when children are about 4 feet 9 inches tall. Keep your child safe and secure while riding in the car.

**FREE** For a \$10 booster seat discount coupon and information packet call Children's Resource Line (206) 326-2500 or 1 (877) 526-2500 (toll free), and select option 4 or visit [www.boosterseat.org](http://www.boosterseat.org).

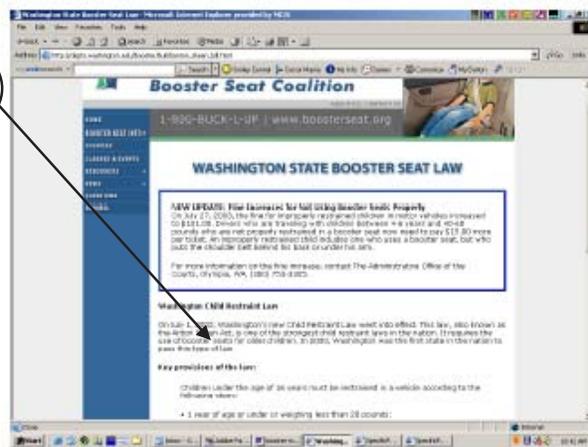
**Children's**  
Hospital & Regional Medical Center  
Seattle, Washington



**Is Your Child Ready for a Seat Belt?  
Think Again!**

**Booster Seat Web Site**

Booster Seats Required By Law.  
Tickets Cost \$101.



One of our messages attracted attention by countering parental beliefs about when children can fit safely in adult seat belts:

When the landmark Washington booster seat law<sup>25</sup> took effect in July 2002, our message appeals used the law to motivate caregivers.

**Buckle up. It's the law.**



Rear-facing seat: Birth-1 year and a least 20 pounds

Forward-facing seat: 1-4 years 20-40 pounds

Booster seat: 4-8 years 40-80 pounds up to 4'9" tall

A message from the Washington State Booster Seat Coalition 1-800-BUCKLUP www.boosterseat.org

**Buckle Up. It's the Law.**

Both messages that used the threat of law enforcement to prompt caregivers to start using booster seats informed parents of the financial consequences of non-use, and targeted more resistant parents and those who used booster seats inconsistently.

**TIPS FOR CREATING MESSAGES WITH IMPACT**

- Keep the message simple.
- Communicate with pictures.
- Use clear, direct language.
- Use images, colors, and headlines to grab the audience's attention.
- Make the message relevant to your audience.
- Write your message in the form of a question to make your audience stop and think.
- Make sure the message reflects what will motivate your audience to start using booster seats.
- Provide a phone number and web site where parents can get further information. This will help you track the impact of your advertisement.
- Test messages and graphics and get feedback from members of your audience before finalizing materials.

MESSAGE

## CHECKLIST FOR DEVELOPING BOOSTER SEAT MESSAGES

- Analyze local and national booster seat use data to determine what booster seat behavior to target.
- Determine your audience (e.g., parents, healthcare providers, or both). Try to narrow your audience such as parents who live in a certain area or who have children of a specific age. These specifications will make your message more effective.
- Once you choose your audience, use information from focus group research to determine the audience's motivation for using booster seats or educating others about booster seats.
- Use your initial research to determine what type of message will appeal to the audience (e.g., emotional appeal that focuses on parental desire to protect child)
- Decide the age or size range that the message recommends.
- Develop potential messages based on your knowledge of audience motivation, appeal, and preferred messengers.
- Test these messages with audience members and gather feedback on what grabs their attention, what is understandable, and what is motivating about the messages. Also, find out what can be improved.
- Modify the message concepts based on audience feedback.
- Before you finalize the messages, test them again with audience members and also show them to a child passenger safety expert to determine technical accuracy.
- As the campaign strategy changes or as new data becomes available, change the messages accordingly.