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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

National Child Passenger Safety Week observance to help raise awareness
MICHIGAN'S BOOSTER SEAT USE RATE REMAINS BELOW 50 PERCENT

Less than half of 4- to 7-year-olds in Michigan are using booster seats, which are shown to reduce serious injuries by nearly 50 percent. Parents and caregivers are reminded of the importance of booster use during National Child Passenger Safety (CPS) Week, Sept. 17-23.

A 2015 observation survey conducted by the Wayne State University Transportation Research Group found that booster usage is 49.7 percent for that age group. A 2008 state law requires children to be properly buckled in a car seat or booster seat until they are 8 years old or 4 feet 9 inches tall.

"Traffic crashes remain a leading cause of death nationwide among children. Car seats and boosters can prevent many of those fatalities and injuries," said Michael L. Prince, director of the Michigan Office of Highway Safety Planning. "Older children are more at risk as car seat use goes down despite boosters being less expensive and easier to use than seats for younger children. The beginning of a new school year is a perfect time to focus on traffic safety for students as they are driven to classes, sports activities and other events."

Booster seats lift the child up so the seat belt fits securely across their hips and shoulders, the strongest parts of the body. When children shorter than 4 feet 9 inches tall don't use a booster, the belt does not fit comfortably and they are more likely to tuck the seat belt behind their back or under their arm which can cause injuries, including internal organ damage or trauma to the neck or head.

There's a five-step test for determining if children should ride without a booster. For a video outlining those steps go to www.youtube.com/watch?v=kyHjHEHjGk

"Children must be in the correct seat for their size and that seat needs to be installed and used properly," Prince said. "Parents and caregivers can meet with trained car seat technicians to learn how to properly use seats."

Michigan has a network of more than 1,000 CPS technicians who assist with proper installation and use of car seats, boosters and seat belts. To make best use of a car seat check, drivers are asked to come with their vehicle, car seat and child. The check usually takes up to 30 minutes. For a list of planned car seat checks, visit Michigan.gov/carseats.

CPS Week is a national initiative to raise awareness for car seat use and encourage caregivers to have their children's car seats inspected by a certified CPS technician. The week culminates on National Seat Check Saturday.

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