



# NEWS RELEASE

## HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF POLICE OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

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### **New Child Safety Seat Law Takes Effect** *Police Working to Educate Drivers on Proper Use of Child Safety Seats*

The Howard County Police Department wants citizens to be aware of a new child passenger safety seat law that takes effect October 1. The new law increases the age requirement for child safety seat use from children younger than four to children younger than six.

Effective Wednesday, children ages five and under regardless of weight or children weighing 40 pounds or less regardless of age must be properly restrained in an appropriate child safety seat. All children ages 15 and under must be restrained in some manner.

Infants must always be placed in rear-facing seats until they are at least one year old and 20 pounds. Children over the age of one who are between 20 and 40 pounds should be placed in forward-facing safety seats. When a child outgrows a forward-facing safety seat, a booster seat should be used until the child is at least eight years old or over 57 inches tall.

*The National Highway Traffic and Safety Administration (NHTSA) estimates that four out of five child safety seats are installed incorrectly.*

In an effort to increase proper car seat installation by consumers, the federal government required that the LATCH system be implemented Sept. 1, 2002. Since that date, all newly manufactured vehicles and child safety seats have been equipped with LATCH, which stands for *Lower Anchors and Tethers for Children*. Cars, minivans, and light trucks are required to have anchor points between the vehicle's seat cushion and the seat back in at least two rear seating positions. Child safety seats have tether straps or rigid connectors that hook into these anchors, thereby eliminating the need to secure the safety seat to the vehicle using the vehicle's seat belt system. Together they make up the LATCH system.

NHTSA estimates that each year LATCH will save as many as 50 lives and prevent 3,000 injuries. In addition, NHTSA estimates that LATCH will eliminate as much as half of the misuse associated with the incorrect installation of child safety seats.

To ensure children are riding correctly on every trip, parents should have their child safety seats inspected by a certified technician. For information about the nearest inspection locations, citizens can visit the Maryland Kids in Safety Seats (KISS) Web site at [www.mdkiss.org](http://www.mdkiss.org).

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