

Summer Transportation Safety – Camps & Carpools

School's out and summer's here!

Whether children attend a youth camp, educational or cultural enrichment program, or participate in a child care program, their daily routine can be vastly different from their school-year routine.

A child will probably spend more time outdoors, engage in more physical activity, and encounter new people and places. Rather than rely on the transportation of a school bus, a child may participate in a car pool with a neighbor or make use of a "transportation service" provided by the camp or program.

Child passenger safety is a topic which remains critically important regardless of the type of camp, program or care facility your child will attend this summer. The following information summarizes Maryland's law and safest practice related to the transportation of children.

What is Maryland's Law?

A person transporting a child under the age of 8 years in a motor vehicle shall secure the child in a federally-approved child safety seat* in accordance with the child safety seat and vehicle manufacturers' instructions unless the child: is 4'9" tall or taller; or weighs more than 65 pounds.

A person may not transport a child under the age of 16 years unless the child is secured in: a child safety seat* or a seat belt in all vehicles (Class A, E, or M).

[*Child safety seat includes infant seats, convertible seats, forward-facing seats, booster seats, or other safety devices federally approved to restrain, seat, or position a child who is transported in a motor vehicle.]

Are camps, church groups, child care providers or others who drive my children required to follow the law?

Yes. Any person who transports the child (and/or agency which provides transportation) must comply with Maryland's Child Passenger Safety law. The driver is responsible for making sure all passengers are correctly restrained in a car seat or seat belt.

What about school buses, charter buses, or vans?

Vehicles registered as a Class H School Bus, Class J Van Pool, or Class P Passenger Bus are exempt from Maryland's Child Passenger Safety law.

A Class H School Bus is statistically the safest form of road transportation available for children because of special safety features and equipment.

However, other charter buses and vans may not have the same safety features and safety standards for the safe transportation of children. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration recently released a safety advisory regarding the use of 15-passenger vans due to their high rate of roll-over crashes and general instability.

<http://www.nhtsa.gov/cars/problems/studies/15PassVans/15PassCustomer.html>

What information should I know about my child's summer transportation?

- What types of vehicles will the program be using? What is the maximum capacity?
- Is there a written transportation safety policy for the camp?
- What type of training do the drivers have? How many years driving experience?
- Will your child be able to ride as safely as possible – using car seats, booster seats, and seat belts as required by the Maryland Child Passenger Safety law?
- Who will provide/install car seats and booster seats used by the children?
- Are emergency transportation plans in place?

How can I find out about the camp or program's safety regulations?

Maryland Youth Camps are regulated by the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH). These regulations include stringent health and safety procedures regarding transportation, camper supervision, first aid, food safety, sanitation, emergency evacuation, and many other areas. Call the DHMH Division of Community Services at 410-767-8417.

http://cha.maryland.gov/ofpchs/comm_srv/ycamp.cfm

Where can I get more information about child passenger safety?

Call Maryland Kids In Safety Seats (K.I.S.S.) at 800-370-SEAT or email

kiss@dhhm.state.md.us

www.mdkiss.org