
SCHOOL BUS
SAFETY
FOR KIDS NEEDING EXTRA CARE
TINA SANDERS, CPST-I
SAFE KIDS GRAND FORKS

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SAFE KIDS GRAND FORKS
Altru
SAFE KIDS GRAND FORKS
Safe Kids Grand Forks is a coalition with a 33-year history. As part of Altru Health System and a fixture in the Grand Forks region, we have been on the forefront of many injury prevention initiatives over our 3 plus decades.
We saw the need for more guidance and education in the area of bus safety and, in the summer of 2023, trained two staff members as the first two course instructors in the state on the CPS in School Bus curriculum.
Keeping kids safe:
at HOME, at SCHOOL, at PLAY and ON the WAY.
Tina Sanders

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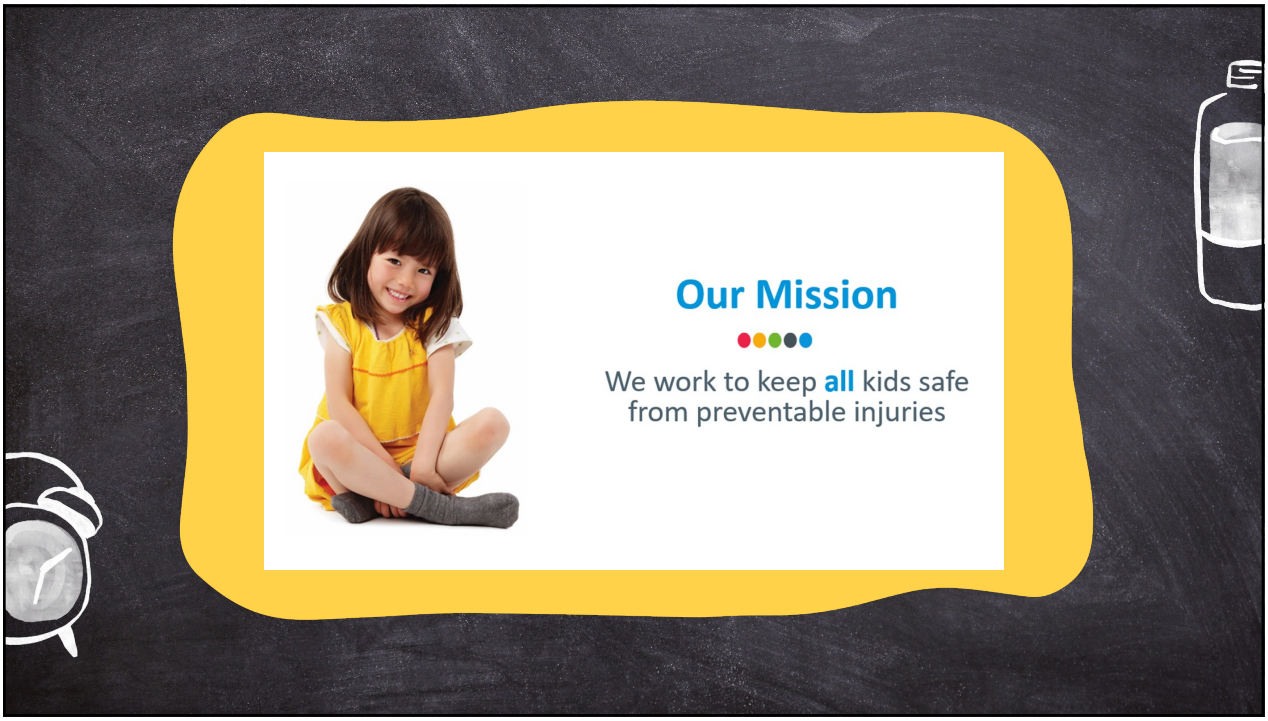
Our Mission
We work to keep all kids safe from preventable injuries

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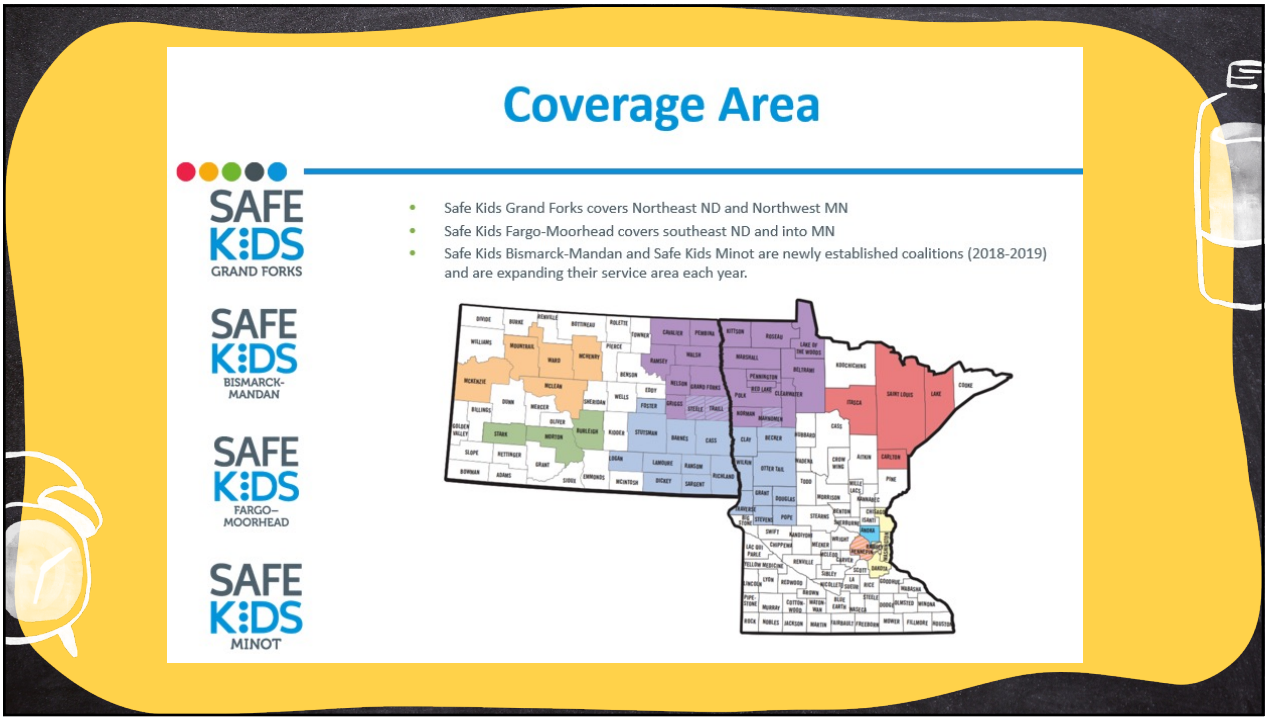
Coverage Area
SAFE KIDS GRAND FORKS
SAFE KIDS BISMARCK-MANDAN
SAFE KIDS FARGO–MOORHEAD
SAFE KIDS MINOT
Safe Kids Grand Forks covers Northeast ND and Northwest MN
Safe Kids Fargo-Moorhead covers southeast ND and into MN
Safe Kids Bismarck-Mandan and Safe Kids Minot are newly established coalitions (2018-2019) and are expanding their service area each year.

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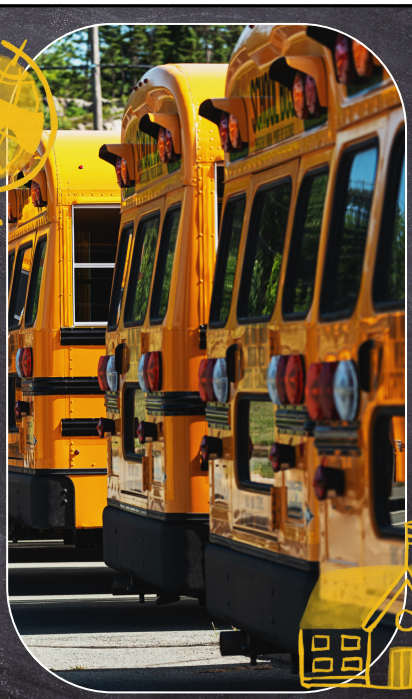
SAFE TRAVEL FOR ALL CHILDREN ON SCHOOL BUSES

Preschool aged kids and children with special transportation considerations due to physical or developmental disabilities require extra care and consideration for a safe ride to and from school on school buses.



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WHAT IS CONSIDERED A SCHOOL BUS?

We will discuss issues specifically related to vehicles classified as school buses, but we are aware that many districts utilize other types of vehicles in student transport, including passenger vehicles, 15-passenger vans, and school activity buses.

The rules, regulations, and statutes I will reference will specifically pertain to school buses.

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SCHOOL BUS ✕

- Classified as a **School Bus** on the vehicle certification label, located by the front door or window.
- Has traffic control devices (flashing lights, stop arms).
- Used for pick up/drop off routes
- Will be painted **School Bus Yellow**
- Important to note Gross Vehicle Weight Rating, as that will determine what type of restraint systems must be present. You can't tell GVWR just by looking at the vehicle

SCHOOL ACTIVITY BUS ✕

- Can meet all the requirements of a school bus, but will not have traffic control devices.
- May be painted School Bus Yellow, but can be painted other colors.
- May NOT be used for street pick up/drop off of students.
- Some of these vehicles are not used by schools, but rather by other community or civic organizations.
- Classification will read "Bus" or "MPV" (Multi Purpose Vehicle).

Vehicles with a GVWR of less than 10,000 lbs MUST have seatbelts in all seating positions. However, it would be uncommon for even small buses to have a GVRW less than 10,000 lbs.

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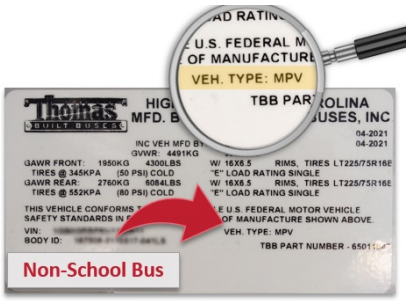
SCHOOL BUS ✕

Identification Label:

SCHOOL ACTIVITY BUS ✕

Identification Label:



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PRESS
WHY NO SEATBELTS ON SCHOOL BUSES?
The question we get ALL THE TIME from parents and kids alike: why don't school buses have to have seatbelts?
The answer is COMPARTMENTALIZATION

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COMPARTMENTALIZATION DOES NOT PROTECT IN SOME CRASHES

In the case of the Northwood bus crash, the bus rolled. Students were ejected from the bus through windows.

It is worth noting that the bus the students were riding in had seatbelts. If students had been wearing them, it is likely that no ejections would have occurred.

This begs the question about whether the school districts issue a policy about seat belt use and enforce that in their vehicles. This would most certainly limit liability.

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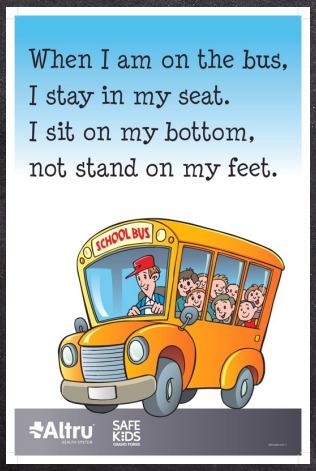
COMPARTMENTALIZATION LIMITATIONS



- Limited protection in roll over crashes

- Only works if the occupants are in the proper precrash position

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OTHER FACTORS BEHIND NO SEATBELTS ON BUSES

- Large brightly colored vehicles that are relatively visible
- Travel on predictable roads and predictable times
- Center of gravity is up higher than regular passenger vehicles
- Cost to place seatbelts on buses
- No current state law requiring seat belts on buses
- "Flexibility" of seating options (2 high school vs 3 elementary students to a seat)
- Injuries and deaths have remained low and so there has not been a "push" for belts on buses as with motor vehicles

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WHO NEEDS TO BE RESTRAINED?

As was mentioned, if seatbelts are available, they SHOULD be used. Let's highlight the students who absolutely NEED to be restrained in some sort of CSRS

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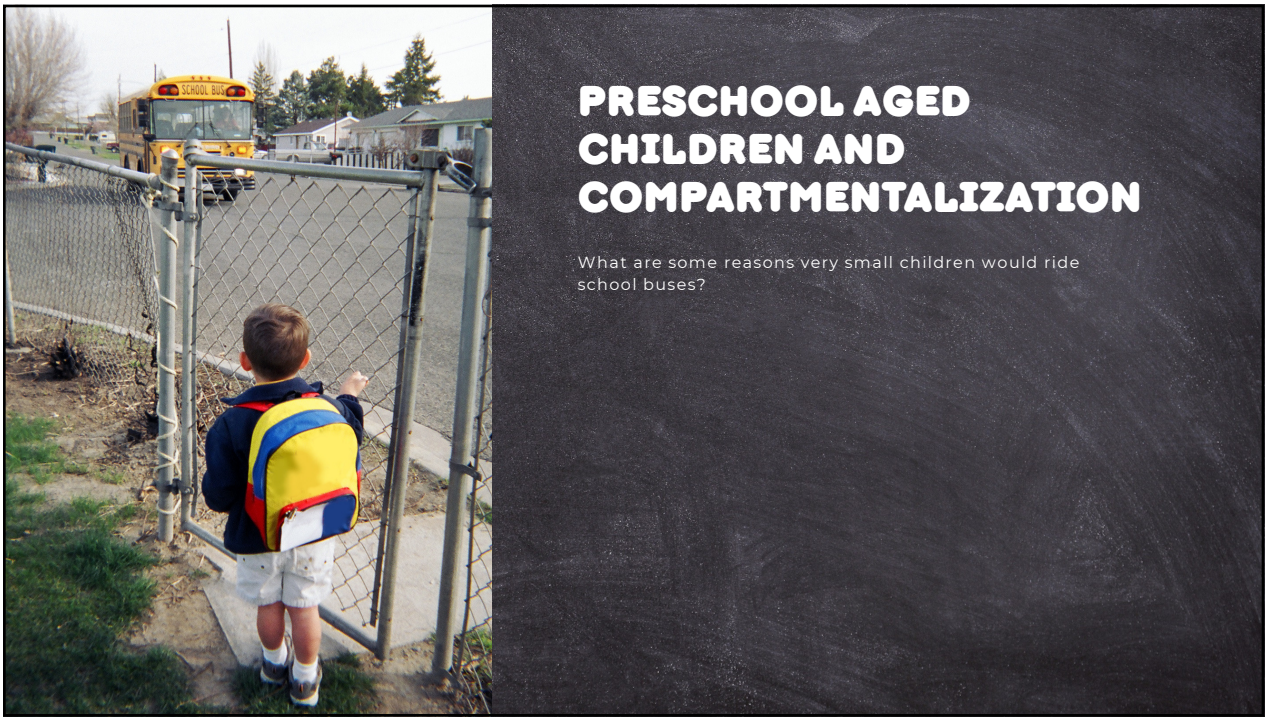
SCHOOL BUS
PRESCHOOL AGED CHILDREN AND COMPARTMENTALIZATION
What are some reasons very small children would ride school buses?

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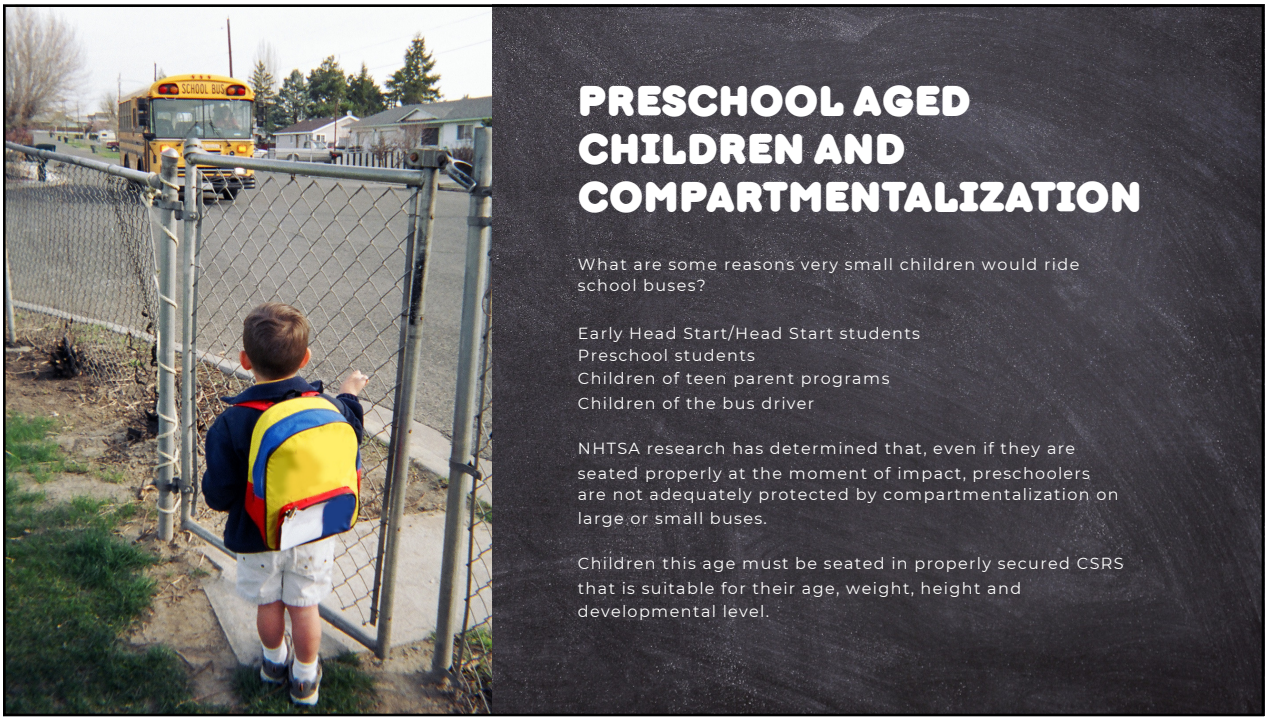
SCHOOL BUS
PRESCHOOL AGED CHILDREN AND COMPARTMENTALIZATION
What are some reasons very small children would ride school buses?
Early Head Start/Head Start students
Preschool students
Children of teen parent programs
Children of the bus driver
NHTSA research has determined that, even if they are seated properly at the moment of impact, preschoolers are not adequately protected by compartmentalization on large or small buses.
Children this age must be seated in properly secured CSRS that is suitable for their age, weight, height and developmental level.

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TRANSPORT CHALLENGES FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS
Let's explore various ways children may be transported safely while supporting them with their unique needs in mind.
Children with physical or developmental disabilities my have an IEP in place. That plan may outline special transportation needs or challenges. How many of you know if your transportation department is involved in the development of transport plans for these children?
Do you feel your school has people that know there are special ways to transport/secure kids on buses besides just using the bench seat?

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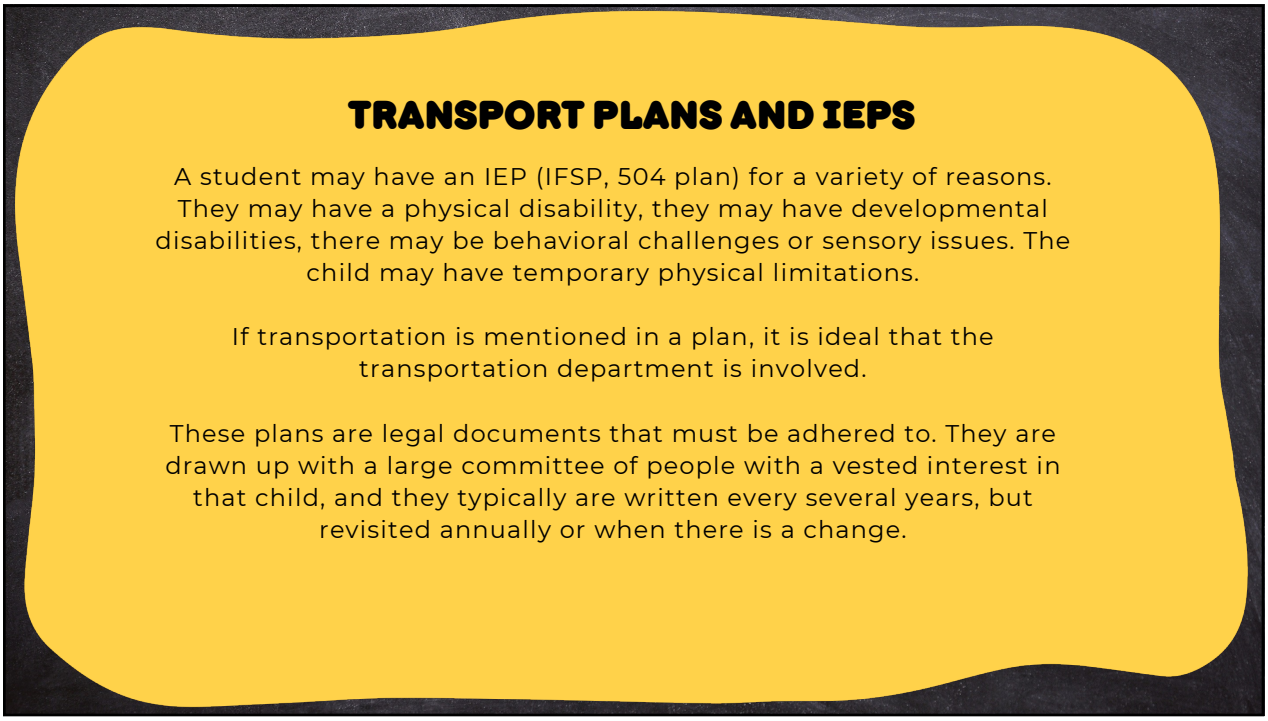
TRANSPORT PLANS AND IEPS
A student may have an IEP (IFSP, 504 plan) for a variety of reasons. They may have a physical disability, they may have developmental disabilities, there may be behavioral challenges or sensory issues. The child may have temporary physical limitations.
If transportation is mentioned in a plan, it is ideal that the transportation department is involved.
These plans are legal documents that must be adhered to. They are drawn up with a large committee of people with a vested interest in that child, and they typically are written every several years, but revisited annually or when there is a change.

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TYPES OF BUS RESTRAINTS

Children who would not be protected via compartmentalization, due to size, disability, behavior, or cognitive challenges may be transported within a Child Safety Restraint System (CSRS).

Buses that have integrated child safety seats can be used as well. We will do an overview of several types of CSRS

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CONVENTIONAL CAR SEATS ON BUSES

It is sometimes believed that regular car seats cannot be installed on buses. They absolutely CAN, but there are some challenges.

Due to the previously mentioned close spacing of bus seats, many conventional car seats are simply too long front to back to fit.

Some buses (such as ones with a GVWR of 10,000 pounds) must have seatbelts. For other buses, seatbelts are optional--if you don't have seatbelts (or lower anchors), you can't install a conventional car seat.

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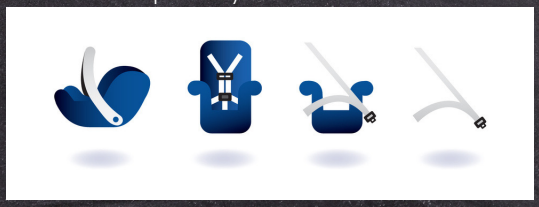
CONVENTIONAL CAR SEATS

Car seats come in several types:

Rear Facing Only
Convertible
Combination
All-in-One

Due to the seat spacing and often lack of seatbelts, installing conventional car seats on buses can be challenging. It is often beneficial to have at least a few seating positions on a bus with seatbelts available for installation of conventional car seats. (These would be described as ones you can get in a store for a regular passenger transport vehicle--car, pick-up, van, etc. They are readily available and cost effective options.)



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REAR FACING CAR SEATS

Infants and toddlers should ride in a rear facing car seat. Riding rear facing protects the child's head, neck and spine in a crash as the crash forces are spread over the shell, instead of the child's body.

These types of seats protect the child's airway by keeping them in a reclined position. This can also be beneficial even for older children who have poor head and neck control.

Installing a seat rear facing can be challenging due to seat spacing. Sometimes the only location that can be used is the front seat. You may have to try out different seats before finding one that fits on a bus.

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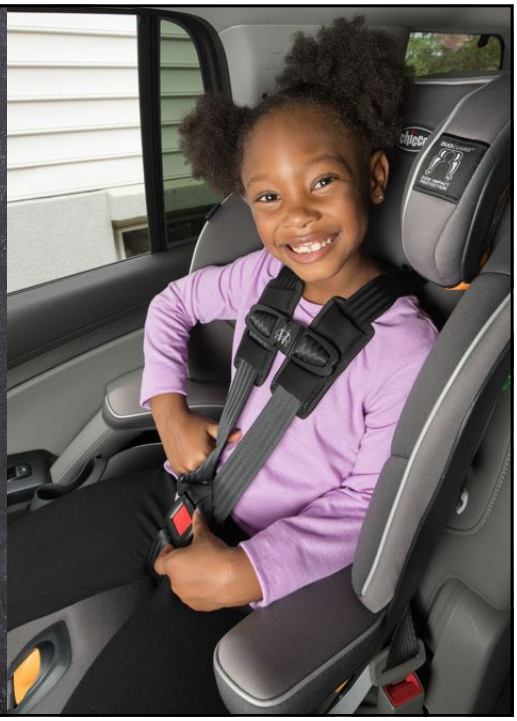
FORWARD FACING CAR SEATS

Children should transport in a forward facing car seat from the time that they outgrow the rear facing limits of the seat until they outgrow the forward facing limits of the seat. Some seats will also have an age limit.

Note that in ND, using a seat outside of the manufacturer's instructions is illegal.

An element of forward facing seats that may not be useable on a bus is the top tether. These, in a passenger vehicle, attached to an anchor point somewhere behind the seat, either in the back window ledge, back or bottom of the vehicle seat, the floor or the ceiling. Buses do not routinely have these available. Seats with harnesses on them are required to be sold with a top tether, and some manufacturers REQUIRE their use, while others suggest it.

If it will not used on the bus, it needs to be properly stored.



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TOP TETHERS

Check the car seat manual to see if they REQUIRE top tether use, prior to purchasing.

Some top tethers can be used with the seatbelt of the seat behind it, and sometimes, top tether anchors can be added to a bus after market, or bus seats with tethers anchors attached can be purchased.

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INTEGRATED SEATS

Integrated seats are an easy option in terms of installation--in that there is no installation. There are some limitations, including inability to seat a child in a reclined position if needed.

Be sure to use them correctly. Common misuse included not folding the seat bottom/cover and not adjusting the harness straps correctly.

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BUS ONLY RESTRAINTS

These are restraint systems that are used only on buses, and cannot be adapted to passenger vehicles. They all install utilizing a cam wrap system, which adds some limitations to the placement of passengers within the bus.

The types we have to explore today:

Belt Converters
BESI and CE White
STAR Restraints

Note that if a cam wrap is used, the seat directly behind that restraint cannot be used by an unrestrained passenger. They must be seated using a seatbelt, integrated seat, another bus only restraint. or conventional car seat installed appropriately.

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VEST CSRS

EZ-On and BESI vest systems have bus products that may be a good fit for many children needing a CSRS.

The vest itself is put onto the child at home/in the classroom, then the bus staff needs to secure the vest to the bus mounts.

Children must wear vest UNDER coats/jackets.

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TRANSPORTING CHILDREN IN WHEELCHAIRS

Children who are able to safely transfer from their wheelchair should transport in a CSRS on the bus.

Safety protocols for loading, transferring, and securement must be followed for every single rider, every single ride.

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CORRECT SECUREMENT STEPS

- Wheelchair securement steps must be carefully followed. The passenger must be forward facing.
- There must be 7 securement points– including 4 on the chair (2 in the front, 2 in the back--do not cross the straps) and a 3-point lap and shoulder belt for the passenger.
- The front securement points should be wider than the rear
- Do not secure to any moving parts (wheels, etc.).
- The wheelchair internal seatbelt is not crash tested, unless the chair specifies otherwise.
- If the lap and shoulder belt system does not fit correctly, the passenger should transport in a CSRS.

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SECUREMENT FOR SMALL WHEELCHAIR USERS:

Best practice for ALL wheelchair users is to transfer to a vehicle seat and use either the seatbelt or a child safety restraint system, not to transport in the wheelchair.

For small wheelchair users, often they are required to transfer to the CSRS, as most manufacturers have a minimum weight for transporting in the wheelchair—many start at 80 pounds. Therefore, most preschool-aged children would need to transfer out of their wheelchair and into a CSRS that is properly installed on the bus bench.

Frequently, these are children with complex medical needs, so your team should consult with a Child Passenger Safety Technician to see if they have recommendations for seating options.

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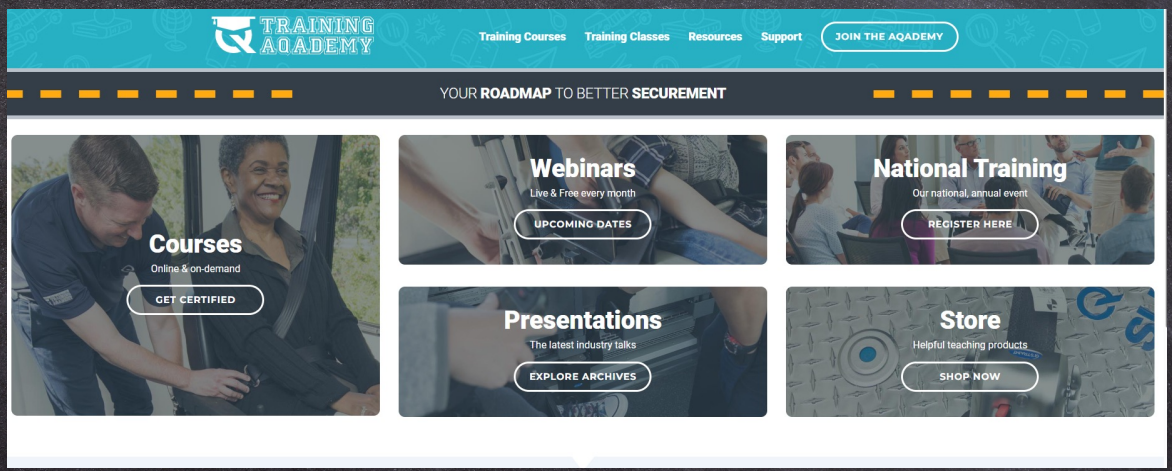

Q'Straint Training

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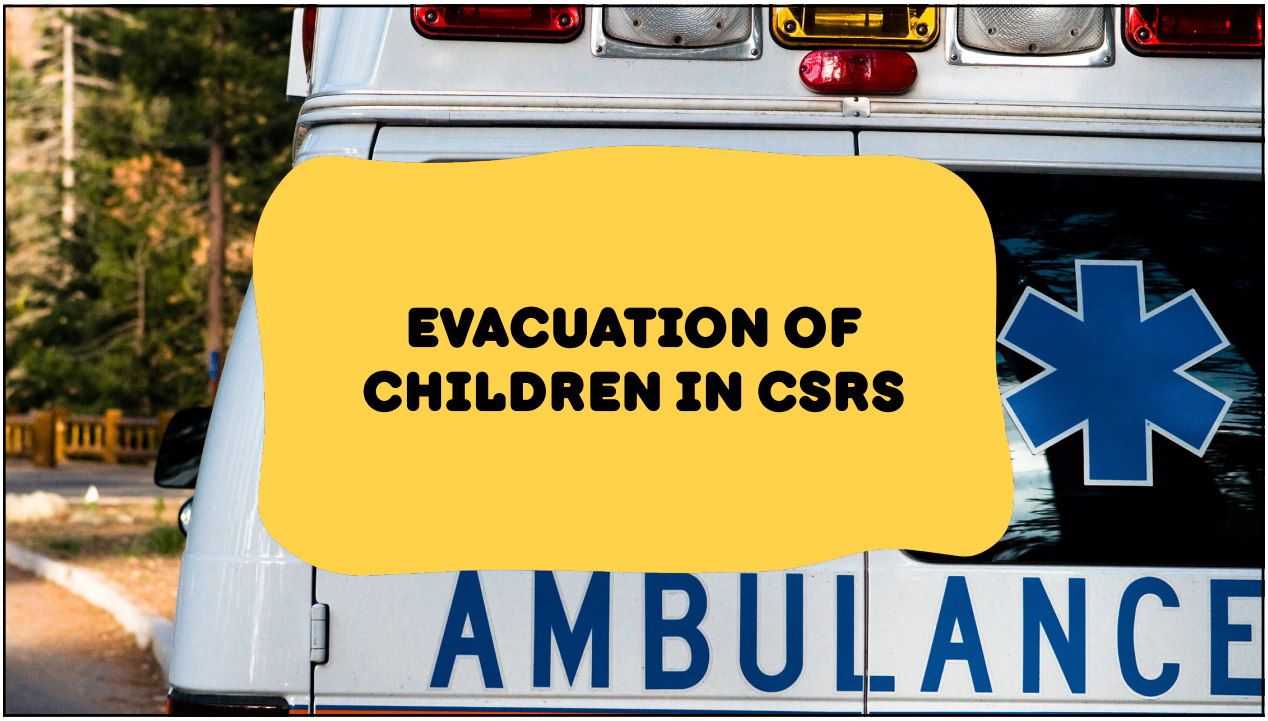

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MISUSE

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MISUSE

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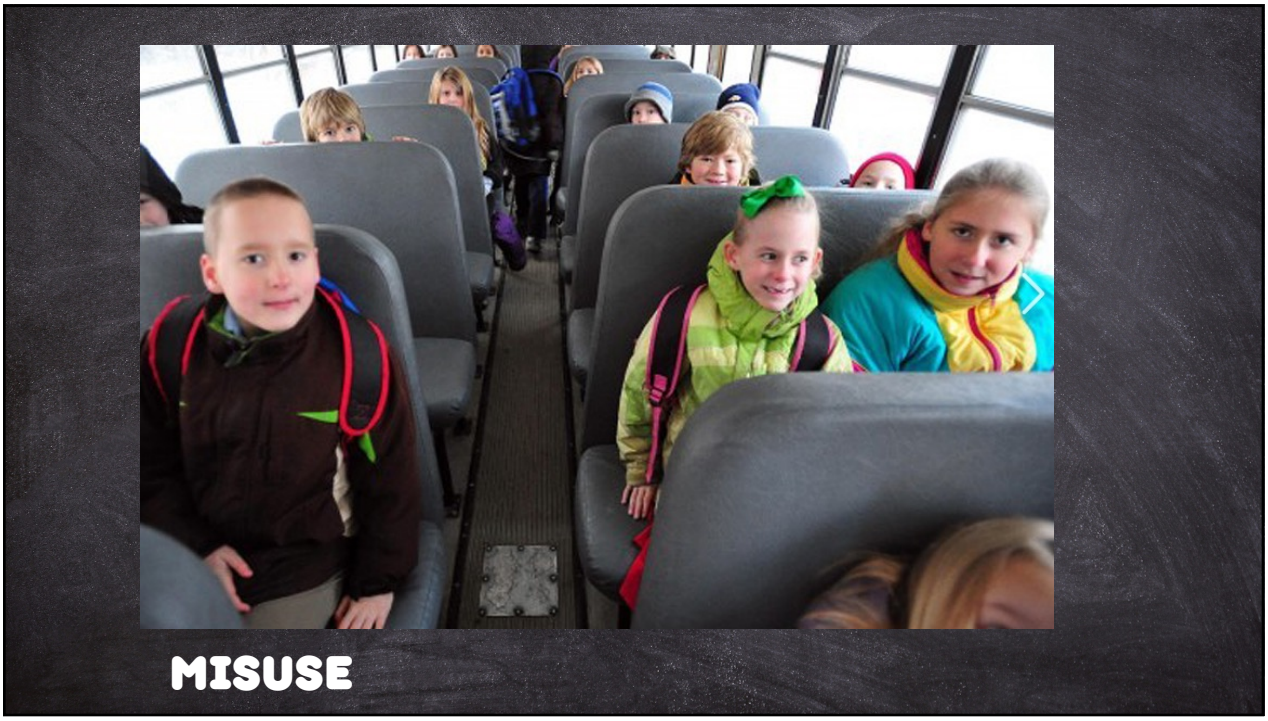

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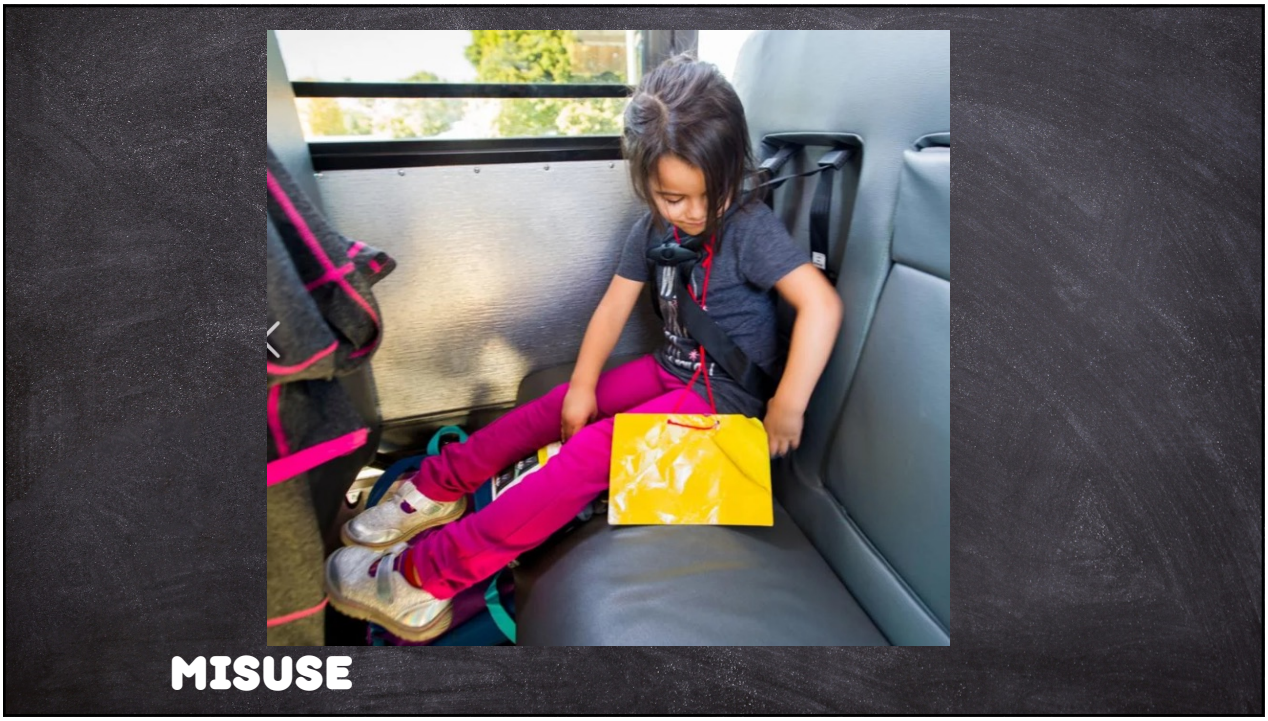
MISUSE

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SAFE KIDS
FARGO–MOORHEAD
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SCHOOL BUS

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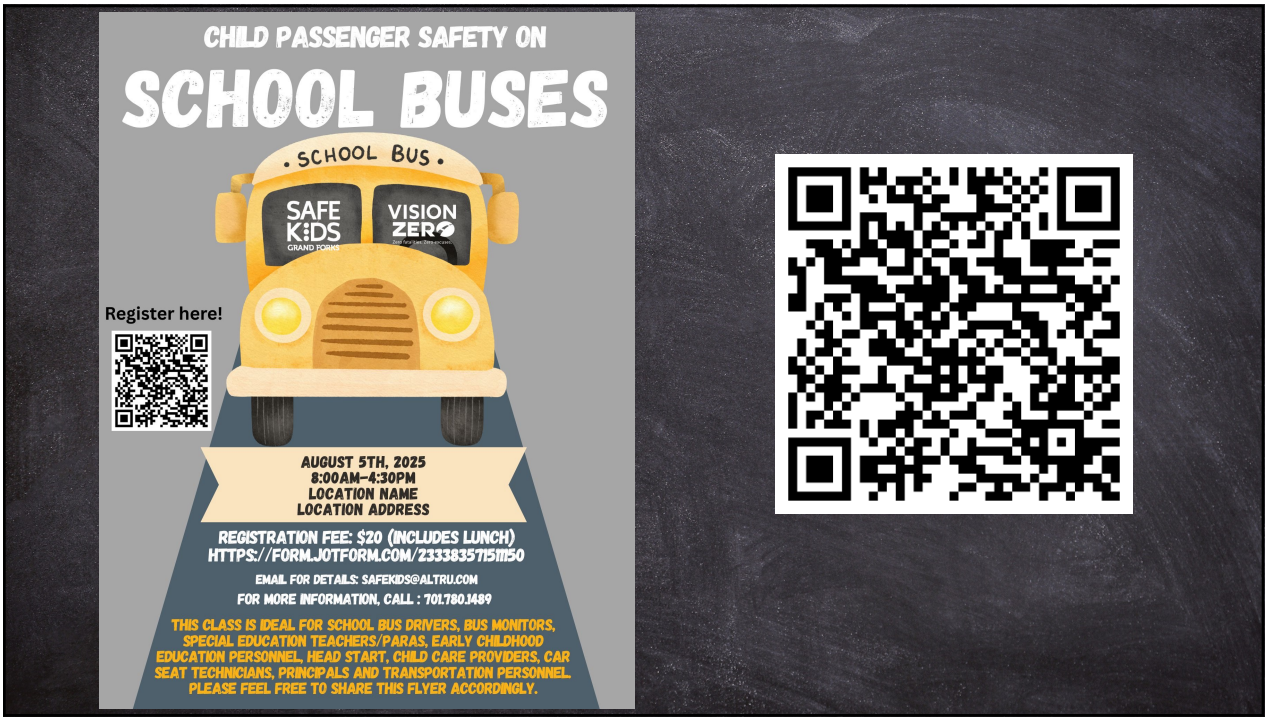
CHILD PASSENGER SAFETY ON
SCHOOL BUSES
SCHOOL BUS
SAFE KIDS GRAND FORKS
VISION ZERO
Register here!
AUGUST 5TH, 2025
8:00AM-4:30PM
LOCATION NAME
LOCATION ADDRESS
REGISTRATION FEE: $20 (INCLUDES LUNCH)
HTTPS://FORM.JOTFORM.COM/233383571511150
EMAIL FOR DETAILS: SAFEKIDS@ALTRU.COM
FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL : 701.780.1489
THIS CLASS IS IDEAL FOR SCHOOL BUS DRIVERS, BUS MONITORS, SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS/PARAS, EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PERSONNEL, HEAD START, CHILD CARE PROVIDERS, CAR SEAT TECHNICIANS, PRINCIPALS AND TRANSPORTATION PERSONNEL. PLEASE FEEL FREE TO SHARE THIS FLYER ACCORDINGLY.

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THANK YOU VERY MUCH!
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