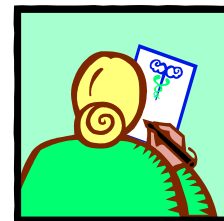


# CHILD SAFETY SEAT OBSERVATION SURVEY GUIDE



## INTRODUCTION

As part of the Ride Safe Program, you will be observing child safety seat use in vehicles at one or more locations in your Tribal area. The goal of your work is to document child restraint use (i.e., use of child passenger safety seats, booster seats and seatbelts) among children riding in motor vehicles.

This will be done at least **two times during the school year**: before and after Ride Safe program activities are implemented at your Head Start Program.

### Important Note:

It is important to conduct the child safety seat observations at the end of the school year in the same way (i.e., same locations, same times, same length of time) that you did at the start of the school year.

When conducting child passenger safety seat use observations, you will identify whether the children observed are restrained or unrestrained. Because the target audience of the Ride Safe Program is toddlers (aged 3-5 years old), you will only record child safety seat use information for toddlers observed.

The Ride Safe Program will use the information that you record (“observational data”) to identify if the Ride Safe Program is having an effect on restraint use in your community.

This Child Passenger Safety Seat Use Observation Guide is designed to help you complete your work in a safe and accurate manner. Please **ASK QUESTIONS**, if any of the materials or instructions are unclear. Please contact your Program Support Staff (e.g., your local Environmental Health Officer/IP Specialist) with your questions/comments.

This guide includes the following main sections:

#### Section I: Getting Started

- A. Contact Tribal Leaders (authorities)
- B. Assemble Observation Team & Equipment
- C. Estimating a Child’s Age
- D. Determine Observation Locations, Time, and Length

#### Section II: Conducting Observations

- A. Things to Remember while Conducting Observations
- B. Completing the Observation Form
- C. What to do with Completed Surveys



## Section I. Getting Started

### A. Contact Tribal Leaders and Other Important Stakeholders

As you prepare to observe vehicles:

1. Make a list of tribal leaders and authorities to contact about Ride Safe vehicle observations. Some suggested tribal entities include, but are not limited to, the Tribal chairperson, Tribal Police and the Tribal Health Director.
2. Contact appropriate tribal leaders and authorities to explain the purpose of Ride Safe Program safety seat observations.

If your community has existing coalitions, ask coalition members to help you contact Tribal leaders and authorities. Some coalition members may represent the Tribal groups that you want to contact. The Tribal Partnership Guide discusses ways for Ride Safe to collaborate with Tribal community members. Activity #2 in the Tribal Partnership Guide outlines how to access existing community coalitions and how to build a new Child Passenger Safety Protection Coalition.

### B. Assemble Observation Team & Equipment

You will **need** the following resources to conduct observations:

- **A vehicle:** you will make most observations from a motor vehicle; you will also need the vehicle to drive to the observation site.
- **Watch:** Observers will record the observation start and end times on the observation form. A watch will help you keep track of time and let you know when 45 minutes is complete.
- **Copies of observation form:** the complete observation form has space for over 90 observations (make additional copies, as necessary).
- **Pencils:** bring at least a couple of pencils with erasers.
- **Clip Board:** this will make it easier to fill out the observational survey form

The Ride Safe Program also **recommends** the following items to make conducting observations a little easier:

- Sunscreen
- Sunglasses
- Water, Juice, Soft drink.

It is often better to have two individuals conduct the observations. One individual to act as a 'spotter' and a second to act as the 'recorder'.

- The **spotter** is someone who observes the cars as they pass and calls-out aloud what s/he sees regarding restraint use.
- The **recorder** is someone who records the information called out by the spotter on to the observation form.

The following people with whom you work could serve as ‘spotters’ or ‘recorders’:

- Ride Safe Coordinator
- Teachers
- Family Service Advocates
- Home Visitors
- Community Partners (e.g., Tribal Police, EMS, Community Health Representative, or Tribal/IHS Environmental Health Officer).

### C. Estimating a Child’s Age:

If the observer has prior working experience with children (teacher, babysitter, parent, etc.), they already have a fundamental awareness of the size range for children between 3 and 5 years of age. If not, determining the age of a child during an observation may be challenging. Regardless of experience, however, there are some useful ways of trying to assess age ranges of children from a distance. To be the most prepared, observers are encouraged to practice estimating the ages of children.

One way to help staff determine a child’s age is estimate the average height and weight for children between 3 and 5 using standard growth rate charts. Growth charts provide a comparison of children’s ages, heights and weights and can be used to familiarize observers with the basic sizes of the children being observed.

The summary table below provides height and weight measurements for toddlers (between 3 and 5½ years) at the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile (i.e., average). *(Note: at these age categories, there is not a lot of difference on average in height and weight between girls and boys, thus the table does not differentiate gender).*

<b>Average Height &amp; Weight of Toddlers (3-5 ½) based on CDC Growth Charts</b>
Average = appx. 4 Feet and 45 lbs

While normally children aged 3-5 years are considered toddlers, 5½ years of age is used in this Guide since some children will be 5½ during the Head Start school year. Using the above criteria should help the observer to better focus their observations in the field.

Along with using the growth chart examples, it is also recommended that the observer visit the Tribal Head Start (if s/he does not already do so on a regular basis) to visit teachers and children in order to observe the size range of children aged 3-5½ years. After familiarizing yourself with the average height and weights of Head Start aged children, you are now ready to make observations.

Remember, once a child has reached a height of 4’9” and 80 pounds, they can use seatbelts. Based on CDC growth charts described above, that milestone generally occurs when a child is between the ages of 9 and 13 years.

## D. Determine Observation Locations, Time, and Length

The Ride Safe Program is interested in monitoring child passenger safety seat use over time to determine the impact of the program. To achieve this, it is important to standardize the sites and times of observations. Using standardized sites, times, and observation methods will allow program staff to compare usage rate percentages over time.

Therefore, the observation site selection suggestions provided below will assist you in obtaining results that may best estimate what impact the Ride Safe Program is having on child safety seat use. Information provided below is based, in part, on methods used in other Tribal communities to collect seatbelt use rates.

### 1. Selecting Observation Locations

Ride Safe Program Coordinators are **strongly** encouraged to identify and use at least **three observation sites** when conducting safety seat observations.

Consider the following general criteria for selecting the three sites:

- Likelihood of observing cars that will have American Indian child passengers who are Head Start-aged (i.e., children 3-5 years of age).
  - **Note:** ideally, it is best if you can observe American Indian child passengers who actually attend your Head Start.
- Likelihood of being able to observe child passenger safety use (i.e., in locations where traffic travels slowly or comes to a stop).
- Likelihood of being able to observe local parents (i.e., at a location with limited 'thru-traffic' from outside the community).
  - To achieve this, the location should be away from roads that receive heavy traffic (main State Highways) from outside the Reservation community.
- Ability to clearly see in the vehicles of oncoming traffic (i.e., views that are not obstructed by trees, buildings or other structures).
  - If possible, select a location where vehicles will stop or traffic is slow, such as a stop sign or stop light. This would be beneficial because you will have more time to observe passengers in slow or stopped vehicles compared with vehicles traveling at high speed.

The following list of possible observation sites may fit the criteria listed above:

- at **Head Start Locations**(this is the best location if parents are picking up and dropping off children)
  - consider conducting observations on special events such as Holiday or Christmas Party or Head Start Graduation
- at **Community Locations** (where likely, if possible, to see Head Start children):
  - at a local convenience store parking lot
  - at a local fast food restaurant parking lot
  - at the local Post Office
  - at the health center.

Ride Safe Coordinators are encouraged to work with Program Support Staff (e.g., local Environmental Health Officer/IP Specialist) to identify and choose appropriate safety seat observation locations.

## **2. Selecting Observation Times**

It is also important to conduct observations at sites selected at a **time of day** that fulfills some of the criteria listed above. For example, an observation that takes place in the morning hours (e.g., 7:00 – 8:00 am) may include more observations of children of Head Start age than an observation conducted during the day on a weekday. Using the same logic, there will probably be fewer children traveling in vehicles during the evening hours, as many children have earlier bedtimes.

**Important Note: While choosing the time of day is important to get valid estimates of a community's child safety seat use, selecting three or more locations to conduct observations is more important.**

Ride Safe Coordinators are encouraged to work with Program Support Staff (e.g., local Environmental Health Officer/IP Specialist) to identify and choose appropriate safety seat observation times.

## **3. Selecting Observation Length**

The Ride Safe Program recommends that you base your observations on time, rather than the number of children you observe. Due to the remoteness of some of the observation sites, it may not be possible to observe a large number of vehicles in a given time frame.

Even if you only observe a small number of vehicles with children at one location, you should **observe each site for only 45 minutes**. At any given observation site, if you observe only a few children, it may be worthwhile adding an additional site (above the 3 already selected) to your data collection plan rather than extending the 45-minute time period.

It is important that you end your observation at 45 minutes. Remember, conducting observations at three or more locations will increase the total number of observations you collect.



## Section II: Conducting Observations

### A. Things to Remember While Conducting Observations

#### **Be Inconspicuous:**

To obtain a valid, unbiased observation of child safety seat use in your community, observers should strive to remain inconspicuous (i.e., not easily seen or noticed) in order to avoid biasing (altering) the survey results. If you are conducting an observation from within a parked vehicle, the best type of vehicle is a personal vehicle or an unmarked vehicle. This may be particularly important if the observer is someone familiar with the children being observed.

#### **Safety:**

Your safety should be your first priority while conducting observational surveys. Do nothing that may put you in any kind of danger, such as getting out of the vehicle, standing near the road, or parking your vehicle too close to the road. Inform your local police department of the times and locations of observations so that officers are aware of what you are doing.

### B. Completing the Observation Form:

At the start of the Survey Form, there are several very important pieces of information you must complete:

1. Observation Location (provide complete address)
2. Type of Location (indicate if the location at the Head Start OR in the community)
3. Observer Name
4. Observation Date
5. Observation Start Time
6. Observation End Time.

Important note: when indicating the **Observation Location and Position at Location**, observers need to be very specific about the location description. Follow-up observations (at the end of the school year) will need to be conducted and they need to be done from this same location. By providing the exact address, you will make the follow-up observation possible.

The purpose of the survey is not to determine if the restraints are being used correctly, but rather, to document the use of child safety seats or seatbelts. Therefore, these observational survey instructions do not require you to stop a vehicle to check to see if a child restraint is being used correctly.

Using the form, you are making observations of each child you observe. You are not recording the number of cars you see, but rather, you are documenting use or non-use of car safety seats for each child that you observe. You will likely record

information about a larger number of children you see than the number of cars that you see. When using the Observation Survey Form, record each child separately in the appropriate row.

The form provided to conduct child passenger safety seat use observational surveys allows you to document – in a ‘comments’ column – unique characteristics of each observation. For example, if you note that a child is in a child safety seat but you believe the seat is in an inappropriate location in the vehicle, you can document this on the form.

The next pages provide several example scenarios to practice recording information. Reading these examples should help you when completing the observation form.

**Remember:**

It is important to conduct the child safety seat observations at the end of the school year in the same way (i.e., same locations, same times, same length of time) that you did at the start of the school year.

**Example 1:** Your first car approaches and you observe an infant in the front passenger seat in a child safety seat and two unrestrained older children in the back seat. The older children look to be 3.5 and 4 feet in height, respectively.

*You would mark your form as follows:*

Toddlers: Age 3–5½ years			
Toddler	Restrained	Unrestrained	Comments
1		X	
2		X	

**Answer:** You would mark unrestrained boxes for the two older children. Remember: You are not recording observations by car, you are looking at this by child, so you would record information about each child. In this case, that represents rows 1-2 on the form.

Note: In this example, you would not record the use for the infant identified, as the Ride Safe Observation form has been developed to assess child safety seat use for children attending Head Start (i.e., ages 3-5). Note: if you want to note information about infants, you could do so in the 'comments' column, however, only use the 'restrained' or 'unrestrained' columns for Toddlers aged 3-5 ½.

**Example 2:** You're watching the same intersection, and the next car approaches. You observe five children in the car. Three children appear to be older than five (i.e., they are above 4.5 feet and 60 pounds). The two younger children (between 3 and 3.5 feet) are not restrained.

*Continuing with the same form (note: you already recorded the children from Example 1 above), you would make the following new recordings (shaded):*

Toddlers: Age 3–5½ years			
Toddler	Restrained	Unrestrained	Comments
1		X	
2		X	
3		X	
4		X	

**Answer:** You would mark the two toddlers as unrestrained (shown shaded). You do not record information about the older children.



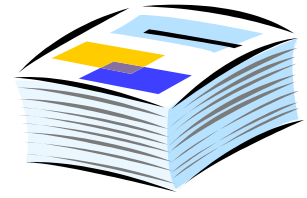
### **C. What To Do with Complete Surveys:**

Once you have completed the observations, you can enter information about your results into your Mid-Year and Final Progress Reports for Round 1 (beginning of school year) and Round 2 (end of school year), respectively. The following data will need to be summarized for all the communities in which observations were conducted, then entered into Progress Reports prior to entry in the Survey Monkey program:

- Month(s) surveys were conducted for Round 1 and Round 2
- Total number of toddlers observed
- Number of toddlers observed restrained
- Percent child safety seat usage for toddlers

Provide one copy of completed observational survey forms to (please keep your original forms) your Environmental Health Officer or Injury Prevention Specialist.

Use the Child Passenger Safety Seat Use Observation Form on the following pages to collect your data.



## Child Passenger Safety Seat Use Observation Form

**Observation Location** (provide complete address): \_\_\_\_\_

**Type of Location:**       Head Start       Community      **Name of Observer:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Observation Date:** \_\_\_\_\_      **Start Time:** \_\_\_\_\_      **End Time:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Toddlers: Age 3-5 ½ years**

Toddler	Restrained	Unrestrained	Comments		Toddler	Restrained	Unrestrained	Comments
1.					26.			
2.					27.			
3.					28.			
4.					29.			
5.					30.			
6.					31.			
7.					32.			
8.					33.			
9.					34.			
10.					35.			
11.					36.			
12.					37.			
13.					38.			
14.					39.			
15.					40.			
16.					41.			
17.					42.			
18.					43.			
19.					44.			
20.					45.			
21.					46.			
22.					47.			
23.					48.			
24.					49.			
25.					50.			
<b>TOTAL</b>					<b>TOTAL</b>			

**T1A**

**T2A**

**T1B**

**T2B**

**Toddlers** (3-5 ½ Years)  
Average = appx. 4 Feet/45 lbs