

Lee County Health Department

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PROMOTING CHILD SAFETY, JULY 2005

The Lee County Health Department's mission is to promote and protect the health of Lee County residents. Safety is a component of health. One program of the department that addresses safety is our child safety seat program.

The Illinois "Booster Law" has been in effect now for a year and a half. In most cases, it is now illegal to transport an unrestrained child in Illinois. The Child Passenger Protection Act requires that all children up to their 8th birthday must be secured in an appropriate child restraint program (a car seat or booster that meets NHTSA safety standards). Children between 8 and 16 years old must be seated in a seatbelt, according to a previously existing law. These are primary moving violations, for which you could be stopped and ticketed if a child is observed to be improperly restrained in your vehicle. More important than avoiding a ticket of course, is the issue of child safety.

The health department has all sizes of child safety seats available for short term rental, up to 6 weeks. These seats fit children from birth to 80 pounds. Any Lee County resident can rent these seats, regardless of income. A deposit of \$20 is required, of which \$15 will be returned when the seat is brought back in good condition with all hardware. Also available to any county resident are preemie car beds for infants who are too small to sit in a regular infant seat. The cost for the preemie bed rental is \$35, which covers our cost of the pad and the harness which we can not reuse when the bed is returned.

In addition to the rental program, the department sells child safety restraints at a reduced cost to county residents under the same guidelines as the reduced priced school lunch income guidelines of 185% of poverty. All seats meet federal guidelines for child safety. The department requires each person renting or purchasing a seat to watch a 20 minute video on child seat safety and installation. Appointments are required and usually take 30 minutes, including the video.

The car seat program is funded through fees and donations. If you would like additional information on this program or an appointment, please contact us at 284-3371.

-Submitted by Cathy Ferguson, B.S., M.P.H., Public Health Administrator