2026 Child Car Seat Laws by State

Category: Child Safety | Data retrieved: 2026-08-12

Child passenger restraint requirements by state for 2026. Federal baseline: NHTSA / AAP recommend rear-facing until at least age 2, forward-facing harness until ~4, booster until the seat belt fits (typically age 8 or 4'9"), and back seat until age 13. As of 2026, 20+ states statutorily require rear-facing until age 2; Oregon and Washington require both age 8 AND 4'9" to leave a booster. Federal FMVSS 213 (crash standard) is being updated by FMVSS 213a (side-impact), effective December 5, 2026.

federal-baseline

Restraint Stage	AAP / NHTSA Minimum	Notes
Rear-facing	Until at least age 2	Keep rear-facing as long as the seat's weight/heig…
Forward-facing harness	Until about age 4	Use the harness until the child outgrows it by weig…
Booster	Until seat belt fits (~age 8 or 4'9")	Booster positions the lap belt on the thighs and…
Back seat	Until age 13	Front airbags can seriously injure or kill children; al…
Federal standard	FMVSS 213; FMVSS 213a side-impact effective…	Sets crash-performance standards for seats, not…

states

State	Rear-Facing Until	Booster Until	Notes
Alabama	Follow manufacturer (RM)	Age 8 or proper belt fit	General statutory restraint required;…
Alaska	Follow manufacturer (RM)	Age 8 or proper belt fit	RM default.
Arizona	Follow manufacturer (RM)	Age 8 or proper belt fit	RM default.
Arkansas	Follow manufacturer (RM)	Age 8 or proper belt fit	RM default.
California	Age 2	Age 8 or 4'9"	Statutory RF-until-2 (with exceptions)…
Colorado	Follow manufacturer (RM)	Age 8 or proper belt fit	RM default.
Connecticut	Age 2	Age 8 or proper belt fit	Statutory RF-until-2.
Delaware	Age 2	Age 8 or proper belt fit	Statutory RF-until-2.
District of Columbia	Follow manufacturer (RM)	Age 8 or proper belt fit	RM default.
Florida	Follow manufacturer (RM)	Age 5 (booster); 6+ belt	FL booster required until age 5 (lowe…
Georgia	Follow manufacturer (RM)	Age 8 or proper belt fit	RM default.
Hawaii	Age 2	Age 9 or 4'9"	Statutory RF-until-2; booster until 9 o…
Idaho	Follow manufacturer (RM)	Age 8 or proper belt fit	RM default.
Illinois	Follow manufacturer (RM)	Age 8 or proper belt fit	RM default (verify — IL has…
Indiana	Follow manufacturer (RM)	Age 8 or proper belt fit	RM default.
Iowa	Follow manufacturer (RM)	Age 6 or proper belt fit	Booster stage typically ages 6–11.
Kansas	Follow manufacturer (RM)	Age 8 or proper belt fit	RM default.
Kentucky	Follow manufacturer (RM)	Age 8 or proper belt fit	RM default; up to 40 in.
Louisiana	Follow manufacturer (RM)	Age 8 or proper belt fit	RM default.
Maine	Age 2	Age 8 or proper belt fit	Statutory RF-until-2.
Maryland	Age 2	Age 8 or 4'9"	Statutory RF-until-2; booster until 8 o…
Massachusetts	Follow manufacturer (RM)	Age 8 or 4'9"	RM default; booster until 8 or 4'9".
Michigan	Age 2	Age 8 or proper belt fit	Strengthened Apr 2025: RF-until-2, F…
Minnesota	Age 2	Age 8 or proper belt fit	Statutory RF-until-2.
Mississippi	Follow manufacturer (RM)	Age 7 or proper belt fit	RM default; MS booster stage ages 4…
Missouri	Age 2	Age 8, 80 lb, or 4'9"	Statutory RF-until-2; booster until 8 /…
Montana	Follow manufacturer (RM)	Age 6 or proper belt fit	RM default; booster ages 6–11.
Nebraska	Age 2	Age 8 or proper belt fit	Statutory RF-until-2.
Nevada	Follow manufacturer (RM)	Age 6 or proper belt fit	RM default; booster until 6 or 60 lb.
New Hampshire	Follow manufacturer (RM)	Age 7 or proper belt fit	RM default.
New Jersey	Age 2 (and <30 lb)	Age 8 or 4'9" (and <57 in)	Statutory RF-until-2 & under 30 lb;…
New Mexico	Age 2	Age 8 or proper belt fit	Statutory RF-until-2.
New York	Age 2	Age 8 or proper belt fit	Statutory RF-until-2.
North Carolina	Follow manufacturer (RM)	Age 8 or 57 in	RM default; booster until 8 or 57 in.
North Dakota	Follow manufacturer (RM)	Age 8 or proper belt fit	RM default.
Ohio	Age 2	Age 9 or proper belt fit	Updated 2026: RF-until-2; booster…
Oklahoma	Age 2	Age 8 or proper belt fit	Statutory RF-until-2.
Oregon	Follow manufacturer (RM)	Age 8 AND 4'9"	Height-based: must meet BOTH age…
Pennsylvania	Follow manufacturer (RM)	Age 8 or proper belt fit	RM default.
Rhode Island	Age 2 (or 20 lb)	Age 8 or 4'9"	Statutory RF-until-2 or 20 lb; booster…
South Carolina	Age 2	Age 8 or proper belt fit	Statutory RF-until-2.
South Dakota	Follow manufacturer (RM)	Age 8 or proper belt fit	RM default.
Tennessee	Follow manufacturer (RM)	Age 9 or proper belt fit	RM default; TN booster until 9.
Texas	Follow manufacturer (RM)	Age 8 or 4'9"	RM default; booster until 8 or 4'9".
Utah	Follow manufacturer (RM)	Age 8 or 4'9"	RM default; booster until 8 or 4'9".
Vermont	Age 2	Age 8 or proper belt fit	Statutory RF-until-2.
Virginia	Age 2	Age 8 or proper belt fit	Statutory RF-until-2.
Washington	Age 2	Age 8 AND 4'9"	Statutory RF-until-2; height-based…
West Virginia	Follow manufacturer (RM)	Age 8 or 4'9"	RM default; booster until 8 or 4'9".

State	Rear-Facing Until	Booster Until	Notes
Wisconsin	Age 2	Age 8 or proper belt fit	Statutory RF-until-2 (under 1 yr & <2…
Wyoming	Follow manufacturer (RM)	Age 9 or proper belt fit	RM default; WY booster until 9.

Sources

• IIHS (via ConsumerShield) — Car Seat Laws: State-By-State Table (June 2026) (https://www.consumershield.app/injuries-accidents/car-accidents/seat-laws)
• kidsittingsafe.com — Car Seat Laws by State 2026: All 50 States Compared (https://www.kidsittingsafe.com/car-seat-law)
• NHTSA — Child Passenger Safety — FMVSS 213 / 213a (https://www.nhtsa.gov/equipment/car-seats-and-booster-seats)

Disclaimer

Informational reference only — NOT legal advice. Laws change and several states have pending bills to raise booster ages or add height thresholds. When driving across state lines you must follow the law of the state you are IN (not your home state) — follow the strictest requirement on a road trip. Always verify the current statute with your state's DMV / legislature. Follow the manufacturer's seat limits and the AAP recommendations regardless of the legal minimum.