DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Vision

Children are 25 percent of the nation’s population, and we must ensure that our nation’s roads, highways, and skies are safe. Children’s important physical, physiological, developmental, and mental differences of children must be factored into regulations and policies governing our transportation systems. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) are important agencies within the Department of Transportation that impact transportation safety for children.

Recommended Administrative Actions

Keep children safe when they fly. As families pack up books and toys to keep their children occupied on planes, airlines should be packing their planes with first aid supplies that are suitable for their smallest passengers. CPR masks, tubes for ventilation, liquids instead of solid pills, and other medications (such as epinephrine) should be sized, dosed, and formulated for children’s smaller bodies. In emergency situations, when every second counts, these drugs and devices can save lives. Unfortunately, the emergency medical kits (EMKs) currently required by the FAA to be maintained on commercial airplanes are outdated and do not include these basic medications and equipment. The next administration should review and update the contents of EMKs required on airplanes, and ensure they contain appropriate medication and equipment to meet children’s emergency medical needs, including an epinephrine auto-injector.

Keep children safe in automobiles. The evolution of child vehicle restraints has been one of the most important public health improvements in recent history. Efforts in this area must continue, however, in order to improve the correct installation and use of child restraints across the child’s developmental stages. Under the next administration, NHTSA should take regulatory steps to improve the ease of using child restraints in vehicles, which can help expand installation and compliance. NHTSA should also address racial and ethnic disparities in child restraint usage and consider ways to encourage the provision of free or low-cost car seats to low-income and under-served communities in order to expand the use of this life-saving equipment.

Ensure children have safe routes to walk and bike to school. Motor vehicle injuries are the leading cause of death and acquired disability in childhood and adolescence. In addition, concerns with safety cause caregivers and students to choose methods other than walking or biking to school, reducing the amount of physical activity they have throughout the day. Communities that implement Safe Routes to School programs increase the number and quality of safe routes to school for youth. By increasing the safety of walking and biking to school, school-aged kids increase their physical activity, which can lead to improved health outcomes. NHTSA should continue and expand programs to ensure that children have safe spaces to engage in physical activity outdoors.

Recommended Congressional Actions

Update contents of Emergency Medical Kits on Airplanes. If the FAA continues not to update the contents of EMKs on airplanes to ensure they contain appropriate medications and equipment for children, Congress should require FAA to update them, as envisioned in the Airplane KITS Act (S. 2536 in the 114th Congress).

Funding Priorities

Reauthorize distracted driving prevention grants for states. Distracted driving can be deadly. In 2014, alone, 3,129 people were killed in distracted driving crashes. According to NHTSA, 10 percent of all drivers 15 to 19 years old involved in fatal crashes were reported as distracted at the time of the crash. This age group has the largest proportion of drivers who were distracted at the time of the crash. NHTSA’s distracted driving enforcement pilot programs have been effective in reducing distracted driving. These funds should be continued and expanded, particularly given the risks of distracted driving among teen and younger drivers.

About this Document

This document is an excerpt from Blueprint for Children: How the Next President Can Build a Foundation for a Healthy Future (http://aap.org/blueprint), which was produced by the American Academy of Pediatrics in September 2016 and has also been endorsed by the following organizations: the Academic Pediatric Association, the American Pediatric Society, America’s Promise Alliance, the Association of Medical School Pediatric Department Chairs, Family Voices, the National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners, the Pediatric Policy Council, the Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine, the Society for Pediatric Research and ZERO TO THREE.