National Digital Car Seat Check Form
Paper Form Version 5.0 User Guide

Car seat checks provide caregivers with the opportunity to receive education, either in-person or virtually, about the correct use of their car seat. Best practice is to document a car seat check regardless of how it is conducted. The National Digital Car Seat Check Form (NDCF) is a useful tool to guide and document a car seat check.

This *NDCF Paper Form User Guide* provides guidance on how to complete version 5.0 of the paper form.

Prior to starting a car seat check, verify that the most current version of the NDCF is being used by visiting carseatcheckform.org.

Type of Seat Check

Fill in the circle identifying how the car seat check information is being collected.

Virtual Check - Car seat check information is being collected as part of a virtual car seat check or a virtual car seat sign off for recertification.

- **Virtual seat check** - Assist a caregiver with a car seat check through a virtual platform.
  - Follow the guidelines in the National Digital Car Seat Check Form Guidance Document: Virtual Car Seat Checks to capture caregiver signature and acknowledgement of the liability statement.

- **Virtual seat sign off for recertification** - Document a seat check sign off while virtually observing the technician demonstrate technical and communication skills while assisting a caregiver either in-person or virtually.

Recert Sign Off - Car seat check information is being collected as part of a car seat sign off for recertification.

Mock Check - Car seat check information is being collected as part of a mock seat installation for recertification.

- *The NDCF program supports the National Child Passenger Safety Board's guidance that best practice for seat check sign offs is to observe interactions and education at actual events with caregivers in attendance. Mock seat checks should be the final resort to meet any required seat check sign offs.*

Online Form ID

Document the online form ID number once the car seat check information has been submitted online at carseatcheckform.org.

- All children identified with the caregiver will have the same online form ID number.

Caregiver Information

The caregiver information must be completed prior to beginning the car seat check.

- Local level data not captured on the NDCF paper form may be collected separately or documented in the Documentation Box found at the end of the form.
- *Only city, state, zip, and county will be entered into the online form.

Vehicle Information

All information in this section must be completed prior to beginning the car seat check.

- Complete the vehicle information even if the caregiver received a ride to the car seat check from someone else (e.g. friend, relative, support program, etc.).
- If the caregiver did not arrive in a passenger vehicle (e.g. public transportation, on foot, etc.), this information may be left blank. Document the reason in the Documentation Box.

Vehicle Make/Model/Model Year

- Verify the vehicle year by checking for the vehicle manufacture date on the driver side door frame, front of the A-pillar. The model year code is also located in the vehicle identification number (VIN) which is visible by looking at the dashboard.
  - The most foolproof method (for vehicles 1980 and later) is to use the VIN. The 10th digit code specifies the model year. The following websites provide VIN decoding information:
  - Carfax provides VIN Decoding information.
  - AutoZone: https://www.autozone.com/vin-decoder.
- Additionally, the vehicle year can be confirmed while checking for open recalls on the vehicle. Technicians can scan the license plate or enter it or the VIN manually. To check for safety issues and recalls, visit: https://www.nhtsa.gov/recalls. Internet connection is required**.**

Liability Statement and Caregiver Signature

The caregiver must read the liability statement (or have it read to them), sign, and date the form prior to the car seat check.

- The NDCF general liability statement is available in English and Spanish. Visit carseatcheckform.org to print a paper form with the appropriate liability statement.
- Agencies may request a customized NDCF paper form with an agency liability statement and logo. Complete the Custom PDF form or contact info@carseatcheckform.org for more information.
- Virtual Seat Checks - Follow the guidelines in the National Digital Car Seat Check Form Guidance Document: Virtual Car Seat Checks to capture caregiver signature and acknowledgement of the liability statement.

Event Information

What CPS Agency is hosting this seat check?
Document the agency providing the car seat check. If the car seat check is not affiliated with an agency, this field may be left blank.

What state is this seat check taking place in?
Document the state in which the car seat check is taking place.

Event
Provide a description of the event. (e.g. Seat Check Saturday, one-on-one appointment, etc.).
- Use this field to differentiate between multiple events hosted by an agency on the same day.

Technicians Participating
Document all technicians who participated in the car seat check including last name and technician certification number**.**

How did caregiver hear about the seat check?
Document how the caregiver learned about the car seat check.

Child Information

On Arrival Child #
Assign each child a number and document.

1. **Child's Age in Years**
   Select the age range of the child even if the child is not present.
   - **Unborn**: Select and proceed to #7.
   - **0<1:** Select if child's age is less than one year. Complete #1a.

   1a. If child is under 1, select the age in months.
   Complete this question only if the child is born <u>and</u> less than 1 year old. Select the child's age range in months.

2. **Child Location in Vehicle**
   Document where the **<u>CHILD</u>** is located in the vehicle on arrival, even if the child is unrestrained. This location may be different than the location of the child's **<u>CAR SEAT</u>** as documented in #7.

   - **D** represents the driver's location.
   - **No Child Present**: Select if there is no child present at the time of the car seat check.
   - **2nd Row**: If the vehicle only has one back row (e.g. sedan), use this option and leave 3rd row blank.

- **4th Row**: Select this option for larger vehicles with more than three rows (e.g. 15-passenger vans). Add additional location information for the 4th row in the Documentation Box.
- Note: If the child arrived in a different vehicle but will also be assessed in this vehicle, instruct the caregiver to secure the child as they normally would and proceed with the seat check.

3. **Height (in.)**
   Document the child's height in inches.
   - If the height is unknown, report an estimated height and document that the height is estimated in the Documentation Box.

4. **Weight (lbs.)**
   Document the child's weight in pounds.
   - If the weight is unknown, report an estimated weight and document that the weight is estimated in the Documentation Box.
   - Note**:** If the caregiver is unsure of the child's height and weight, the Technician has the option to verify height and weight if possible.

5. **How were height and weight collected?**
   Select whether the caregiver reported the child's height and weight or if the child was measured and weighed at the car seat check.

6. **Child Secured Using**
   Select how the **CHILD** is secured on arrival.

   - If the **child** is using a booster seat, lap and shoulder belt or lap belt, answer #6a. Otherwise, skip to #7.

   6a. Child Seat Belt Correct
   Answer this question **only if** the child arrives in a booster seat or is using a seat belt.
   - If **No,** select all misuse that applies.
     - If a description of seat belt error is not listed, provide a brief description in the "Other" box. If more detail is necessary, describe it in the Documentation Box.

CS Findings on Arrival (Page 1)

7. **CS Location in Vehicle**
   Document where the **CAR SEAT (CS)** is located in the vehicle on arrival. This location may be different than the location of the **CHILD** as documented in #2, Child Location in Vehicle.
   - **D** represents the driver's location.
   - **2nd Row**: If the vehicle only has one back row (e.g. sedan), use this option and leave 3rd row blank.
   - **No CS**: Select if the child does not have a car seat and proceed to #34.
   - **Uninstalled**: Select if the car seat is present but not secured in a seating position (e.g. in vehicle trunk, in a box).

- **4th Row**: Select this option for larger vehicles with more than three rows (e.g. 15-passenger vans). Add additional location information for the 4th row to the Documentation Box at the end of the form.

8. **CS Restraint Type**

Check restraint type being used on arrival.

- **Note:** If the car seat is an all-in-one, choose the option that best describes how it was installed (e.g. RF Convertible, FF with Harness, Backless Booster, High Back Booster).
- **RF Only without Base:** Any rear-facing only car seat designed for use only by a young child in a semi-reclined rear-facing position; not permitted by manufacturer to be used forward-facing; also referred to as an infant car seat; only the carrier is present.
- **RF Only with Base:** Any rear-facing only car seat designed for use only by a young child in a semi-reclined rear-facing position; not permitted by the manufacturer to be used forward-facing; also referred to as an infant car seat; the carrier and detachable base are present.
- **Base Only:** Detachable base for rear-facing only car seat; the carrier is not present.
- **RF Convertible**: Car seat that can be used rear-facing and forward facing. Select this option when the car seat is being used rear-facing. For rear-facing only car seats, select RF Only without Base or RF Only with Base.
- **FF with Harness**: Forward-facing car seat being used with harness including convertible, combination, all-in-one, forward-facing only, and integrated car seats.
- **High Back Booster**: Booster seat (or combination or all-in-one car seat being used in the booster mode) with a shell that provides head, neck, and back support for the child; raises and positions the child using a lap-and-shoulder belt.
- **Backless Booster**: Booster seat (or combination or all-in-one car seat being used in the booster mode) that uses the vehicle's seat back or head restraint for head, neck, and back support for the child; raises and positions the child using a lap-and-shoulder belt; also referred to as low-back booster seat or no-back booster seat.
- **Specialized Restraint**: Car seats and booster seats obtained through a specialized provider for use with children who have special transportation needs.
- **Vest**: A harness system used in place of a car seat or booster seat; works with either the vehicle seat belt system or LATCH.
- **Other**: Document the restraint type if the car seat does not fit any of the options above.

9. **CS Installed Using**

Document the ways the car seat is installed in the vehicle on arrival; select all that apply.
- Document additional findings in the Documentation Box.
- If the car seat is uninstalled, Skip to #21.

10. **CS Harness Correct**

Document if the car seat harness is being used correctly on arrival.
- If **No**, select all misuse that applies.
  - If a description of harness error is not listed, provide a brief description in the "Other" box. If more detail is necessary, include it in the Documentation Box.
- **N/A**: Check if child is using a restraint without a harness (e.g. booster seat).

11. Recline Angle Correct

Document if the car seat is reclined according to the car seat manufacturer's instructions on arrival.

- ■ **N/A**: Check if recline angle does not apply to this car seat.

12. Lower Anchors Correct

If the car seat is installed using lower anchors, document if the lower anchors are used correctly on arrival.

- ■ If **No**, select all misuse that applies.
  - • If a description of lower anchor misuse is not listed, provide a brief description in the "Other" box. If more detail is necessary, include it in the Documentation Box.
- ■ **N/A**: Check if the car seat is not installed with lower anchors.

CS Findings on Arrival (Page 2)

13. Seat Belt Correct

If the car seat is installed using a seat belt, document if the seat belt is used correctly on arrival.

- ■ If **No**, select all misuse that applies.
  - • If a description of seat belt misuse is not listed, provide a brief description in the "Other" box. If more detail is necessary, include it in the Documentation Box.
- ■ **N/A:** Check if the car seat is not installed with a seat belt.

14. Tether Correct

Document if the tether is used per the car seat manufacturer's instructions on arrival.

- ■ If **No**, select all misuse that applies.
  - • If a description of tether misuse is not listed, provide a brief description in the "Other" box. If more detail is necessary, include it in the Documentation Box.
- ■ **N/A**: Check if the car seat does not have a tether <u>or</u> if a tether is present and not being used per the car seat manufacturer's instructions (e.g. a convertible seat in the rear-facing position).

15. Handle Position

Document if the carry handle is being used according to the car seat manufacturer's instructions on arrival.

- ■ **N/A**: Check if the car seat does not have a carry handle.

16. Load Leg

Document if the load leg/foot prop is being used according to the car seat manufacturer's instructions on arrival.

- ■ **N/A**: Check if the car seat does not have load leg/foot prop.

17. Anti-Rebound Bar

Document if the anti-rebound bar is being used according to the car seat manufacturer's instructions on arrival.

- ■ **N/A**: Check if the car seat does not have an anti-rebound bar.

18. Are there non-approved products?
Document if the caregiver is using any non-approved products on, under, or next to the car seat or on the seat belt, on arrival.
- **Yes**: Document additional information in the Documentation Box.

19. CS Correct Direction Per MFG's Instructions
Based on the child information <u>and</u> the car seat manufacturer's instructions, document if the car seat is installed facing the correct direction on arrival.

20. CS Secured Per MFG's Instructions
Based on the information collected in #1 through #19, document if the car seat is installed according to the car seat manufacturer's instructions on arrival.
- **Unknown**: Check if the car seat instruction manual is unavailable to verify if the car seat is installed according to the car seat manufacturer's instructions.

21. CS Correct for Child Age, Height, and Weight per MFG's Instructions
Based on information collected in #1, #3, and #4, and the car seat manufacturer's instructions, determine if the child meets the age, height, and weight requirements of the car seat.
- **Unknown**: Check if the car seat instruction manual is unavailable and verification is not possible.
- Note: If the child is not present, ask the caregiver to estimate the child's height and weight. Use that information to respond to this question.

22. CS Correct Per State's Law
Based on the information collected in #1, #3, and #4, determine if the car seat is being used correctly according to the current state law.
- **N/A**: Check if the state law does not apply to the current car seat check. To view your State's CPS law, visit https://www.ghsa.org/state-laws.

23. CS Labels Missing
Document if the car seat being used on arrival is missing labels needed to identify general use information.
- **Yes**: Complete as much information as possible in #24 through #30.

24. CS MFG
Document the manufacturer name of the car seat being used on arrival.
- If the manufacturer information cannot be determined, enter "U" in the text box.

25. Model Name
Document the model name of the car seat being used on arrival.
- If the model name cannot be determined, leave blank.

26. Model Number
Document the model number of the car seat being used on arrival.
- If the model number cannot be determined, leave blank.

27. MFG Date (MM/DD/YYYY)
Document the date of manufacture of the car seat being used on arrival.
- If the manufacturer date cannot be determined, leave blank.

28. Expiration Date (MM/DD/YYYY)
Document the expiration date, if available, of the car seat being used on arrival.
- If the expiration date cannot be determined, leave blank.

29. CS Expired
Determine and document if the car seat being used on arrival is expired.
- **Unknown**: Check if unable to determine if the car seat is expired.

30. CS Recalled
Using the car seat information collected, identify any recalls on the car seat being used on arrival and document in the Documentation Box.
- **Unknown**: Check if unable to determine if the car seat is recalled.
- To view the most recent recall link, visit NHTSA.gov.

31. CS History Known
Determine and document if the history of the car seat being used on arrival is known.

32. CS Involved in a Crash
Determine and document if the car seat being used on arrival has been involved in a crash.
- If the car seat has been involved in a crash <u>or</u> if the history of the car seat is unknown, consider the need to replace the car seat.

33. CS Registered
Determine and document if the car seat being used on arrival is registered with the car seat manufacturer, using the caregiver's current address.
- If the car seat is not registered <u>or</u> if it is unknown if the car seat is registered, provide guidance to the caregiver on how to register the car seat.
- Consider registering the car seat on-site prior to the caregiver leaving the car seat check.

On Departure

34. Child/CS Location in Vehicle
Document where the **CHILD** and the **CAR SEAT** are located in the vehicle on departure. These should be the same location in the vehicle.
- **D** represents the driver's location.
- **2nd Row**: If the vehicle only has one back row (e.g. sedan), use this option and leave 3rd row blank.
- **4th Row**: Select this option for larger vehicles with more than three rows (e.g. 15-passenger vans). Add additional location information for the 4th row in the Documentation Box.
- **Demonstration Only**: Check if the car seat is installed on a vehicle demonstration seat, not in a vehicle.
  - Installation on a vehicle demonstration seat should only be done when no other options are available.

35. Restraint Type

Document the restraint type being used on departure.

- ■ **Note:** If the car seat is an All-in-one, choose the option that best describes how it was installed (e.g. RF Convertible, FF with Harness, Backless Booster, High Back Booster).
- ■ **RF Only without Base**: Any rear-facing only car seat designed for use only by a young child in a semi-reclined rear-facing position; not permitted by manufacturer to be used forward-facing; also referred to as an infant car seat; only the carrier is present.
- ■ **RF Only with Base**: Any rear-facing only car seat designed for use only by a young child in a semi-reclined rear-facing position; not permitted by manufacturer to be used forward-facing; also referred to as an infant car seat; the carrier and detachable base are present.
- ■ **Base Only**: Detachable base for rear-facing only car seat; the carrier is not present.
- ■ **RF Convertible**: Car seat that can be used rear-facing and forward facing. Select this option when the car seat is being used rear-facing. For rear-facing only car seats, select RF Only without Base or RF Only with Base.
- ■ **FF with Harness**: Forward-facing car seat being used with a harness, including convertible, combination, all-in-one, forward-facing only, and integrated car seats.
- ■ **High Back Booster**: Booster seat (or combination or all-in-one car seat being used in the booster mode) with a shell that provides head, neck, and back support for the child; raises and positions the child using a lap-and-shoulder belt.
- ■ **Backless Booster**: Booster seat (or combination or all-in-one car seat being used in the booster mode) that uses the vehicle's seat back or head restraint for head, neck, and back support for the child; raises and positions the child using a lap-and-shoulder belt; also referred to as low-back booster seat or no-back booster seat.
- ■ **Specialized Restraint**: Car seats and booster seats obtained through a specialized provider for use with children who have special transportation needs.
- ■ **Vest**: A harness system used in place of a car seat or booster seat; works with either the vehicle seat belt system or LATCH.
- ■ **No CS**: No car seat.
- ■ **Other**: Document the restraint type if it does not fit any of the options above.

36. Child Secured Using

Select how the **CHILD** is secured on departure.

- ■ **No Child Present**: Select if no child is present at the car seat check.

37. CS Installed Using

Document how the **CAR SEAT** is installed in the vehicle on departure; select all that apply.

- ■ Document additional findings in the Documentation Box.
- ■ **No CS**: Check if a child left without a car seat. Proceed to #46.
- ■ **Demonstration Only**: Check if the car seat is not installed on departure (e.g. carried, placed in vehicle trunk, etc.)

38. Is this the same CS as 'On Arrival'?

Document if the same car seat is used on arrival and departure.

- ■ **Yes**: If the same car seat is used on arrival and departure, proceed to #44.

38a. If no, CS provided by:
Document who provided the car seat for the child on departure.

38b. Meets Eligibility Requirements
Check this box if the caregiver meets the eligibility requirements to receive the car seat provided by the donor in #38a.
- Document any additional local information in the Documentation Box.

39. CS MFG
Document the manufacturer name of the car seat being used on departure.

40. Model Name
Document the model name of the car seat being used on departure.
- If the model name cannot be determined, enter "U" in the text box.

41. Model Number
Document the model number of the car seat being used on departure.
- If the model number cannot be determined, enter "U" in the text box.

42. MFG Date (MM/DD/YYYY)
Document the date of manufacture of the car seat being used on departure.

43. Expiration Date (MM/DD/YYYY)
Document the expiration date, if available, of the car seat being used on departure.

44. CS Registered for Recalls By
Document who is responsible for registering the car seat being used on departure.
- **N/A**: Select if no car seat is being used on departure.

45. Is the CS compatible with the vehicle?
Document if the car seat being used on departure is compatible with the vehicle.
- **Yes, without difficulty:** Proceed to #46.
- **Yes, with difficulty:** Answer #45a.
- **No, a different car seat is/was needed:** Answer #45a.

45a. What difficulties did you encounter?
Document if the caregiver was able to install the car seat without difficulty. REMINDER: the caregiver should be the last one to install the car seat.
- Select all difficulties that were encountered when installing the car seat being used on departure**.**
- **Other**: If a description of the installation difficulty is not listed, provide a brief description in the "Other" box. If more detail is necessary, describe it in the Documentation Box.

46. All corrections made prior to departure?
Document if all corrections are made to the car seat prior to departure.
- **No**: Provide an explanation as to why all corrections are not made in the Documentation Box.

Technician Discussed

Circle all topics discussed with the caregiver. Nationally certified CPS Technicians can access the [2020 National Child Passenger Safety Technician Certification Training Technician Guide](#) (TG) for additional information about the following topics as indicated below.

- **Airbags:** Location and potential danger of airbags to children and out of position occupants (TG Module 5).
- **Unused seat belts**: Strangulation dangers of unused seat belts.
  - Additional information is available at [cpsboard.org/car-seat-safety/car-seat-safety-entanglement/.](#)
- **Projectiles**: Loose objects in the vehicle that can cause injury (TG 3-2).
- **Premature transition**: Potential risks from moving from rear-facing to forward-facing and harness to booster seat too soon (TG Modules 7-10).
- **Heatstroke**: Prevention tips to avoid hot car deaths (TG 12-5).
  - Additional information is available at [cpsboard.org/heatstroke](#).
- **Next steps:** Change of direction from rear-facing to forward-facing, transition to next car seat stage, etc. (TG Modules 7-10).
- **Best practice vs. state law:** Guidance on best practice recommendations vs. state law (TG 2-4 and 7-3).
- **Safety in and around cars**: Dangers of leaving children unattended in and around cars (TG 12-5). Additional information is available at [cpsboard.org/heatstroke](#).
- **CS recycled:** What to do with a car seat when it reaches its expiration date.
  - Encourage caregivers to check with local recycling programs.
  - Refer caregivers to car seat manufacturer information on car seat recycling.
- **Bulky clothing:** Dangers of securing a child in a car seat with bulky winter clothing.
  - Additional information is available at [AAP Recommendations.](#)

Caregiver Sign Off

Virtual Check
Fill in the circle if the car seat check information is being collected as part of a virtual car seat check and the form is being signed off by the technician instead of the caregiver.

47. I harnessed a child/doll in a CS.
The caregiver indicates if he/she harnessed a child/doll in the car seat.
- **No**: Provide explanation in the Documentation Box.
- **N/A**: Check if there is no child or doll present.

48. I installed my car seat today.
The caregiver indicates if he/she installed the car seat today. If the car seat check information is being collected as part of a virtual car seat check, the technician will select the appropriate response based on the caregiver's actions.
- **No**: Provide an explanation in the Documentation Box.
- **N/A**: Select if the car seat is not installed in a vehicle or it is installed on a vehicle demonstration seat.

49. Caregiver's Initials
The caregiver acknowledges #47 and #48 by signing his/her initials.
- For a virtual seat check, write the word **VIRTUAL.**

50. Caregiver Donation
Document if the caregiver provides a donation.
- **Yes, Donation Amount**: If the caregiver provides a donation, enter the amount in the box.
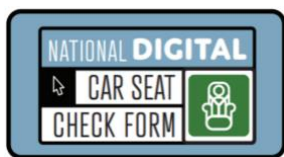
51. Educational materials given?
Document if educational materials are provided.

52. Final Inspection Sign Off
Document a final sign off by a senior checker, an Instructor, or a Technician Proxy prior to departure, if required.
- If not required, leave blank.

53. Documentation Box: Document any other findings or situations.

National Digital Car Seat Check Form –
Common Seat Check Scenario Guidance

The following chart provides guidance on the most common car seat check scenarios.

Child present/car seat present	Complete #1 through #52.
Child present/booster seat	Complete #1 through #52 ■ #6, document how the **CHILD** is secured.
Child present/seat belt use	Complete #1 through #6 • #6a, document how the **CHILD** is secured. • Skip to #34. • If child leaves without a car seat, complete #34 through #37; skip to #46 and complete #46 through #52.
Child present - not riding in car seat in the vehicle. (e.g. Sitting next to the car seat)	Complete #1 through #52. • In #2, document location of **CHILD**. • In #7, document location of **CAR SEAT**.
Child present/NO car seat	Complete #1 through #7. • Skip to #34. • If child leaves with a car seat, complete #34 through #52. • If child leaves without a car seat, complete #34 through #37; skip to #46 and complete #46 through #52.
Car seat present but NO child	Complete #1 through #52. • **UNBORN** child, complete #1 and #7; proceed through remainder of form. • **CHILD NOT PRESENT,** complete #1 through #52.
NO child/NO car seat	For an **UNBORN** child, answer #1 and #7. • Skip to #34 and complete #34 through #37. • Skip to #46 and complete #46 through #52. For a **CHILD NOT PRESENT,** complete #1 through #7. • Skip to #34 and complete #34 through #37. • Skip to #46 and complete #46 through #52.
Distribution car seat	Complete #1 through #52.
Car seat uninstalled	Complete #1 through #9. • Skip to #21 • Complete #21 through #52.