

# New Bedford police share driving child safety tips

During two separate motor vehicle stops Sunday by New Bedford Police, a troubling discovery was made in the back seat.

In one case, a young boy was jumping in the back seat of a vehicle, completely unrestrained.

In the second situation, three young people – a 16-year-old, 14-year-old and two 10-year-olds – were unbuckled in the back seat.

In both cases, the drivers broke the law and put the children at risk of serious injury, or worse.

Motor vehicle crashes are among the leading causes of death for children ages 3 to 14. This risk can be reduced by having children ride in a properly fastened and secured safety seat.

Even a sudden stop can seriously injure a child who is not secured in the right type of child safety seat.

It's important to understand vehicle restraint regulations, which vary by age. Remember: The back seat is the safest place in a vehicle for children.

From birth to 12 months, the child should ride in a rear-facing car seat.

From one to three years of age, children should remain in a rear-facing car seat until they reach the top height or weight limit allowed by the child seat manufacturer. Once they outgrow the rear-facing seat, they are ready to travel in a forward-facing seat with a harness.

From ages four to seven, keep the child in a forward-facing car seat with a harness until he or she reaches the top height

or weight limit allowed by the child seat's manufacturer. Once the child outgrows the forward-facing seat, it's time to travel in a booster seat in the back seat of the car.

Massachusetts law requires that the child remain secured in a federally approved booster seat/safety belt combination until he or she reaches eight years old or 57 inches (4' 9'') in height.

At the time, children are required to wear adult safety belts, properly adjusted to their size. Anyone 13 and older is required to wear a seat belt.

These regulations aim to keep everyone safe. Ignoring them can have legal consequences.

If a passenger is at least 13 years old but not yet 16, then the operator can be issued a citation. If a passenger is 16 years of age or older then the passenger gets issued the citation

New Bedford Police Community Police Officer Robert Gomes is a child seat and seat belt specialist. Anyone with questions or concerns about these issues may call him at station three at 508-991-6360.