



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE PUBLICATION:
May 6, 2010

CONTACT: José A. Álvarez (619) 515-6635

COUNTY KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE ***2,000 Child Car Seats Going to Low-Income Families***

Golden Hill resident, Ivonne Bastida, thought her 8-year old daughter, Susan, did not need a safety booster seat while riding in the family vehicle. She was wrong.

"I used to drive around without a booster," said Bastida. "Then in class I learned that she needed one because the seat belt hit over her neck."

Bastida and hundreds of other parents are learning about the importance of using weight and height appropriate child car seats at safety classes sponsored by the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency (HHS) and its partner, the Pacific Safety Council.

The safety presentations and the child car seats are available thanks to a \$207,000 grant HHS received late last year from the California Office of Traffic Safety with funding from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

To date, nearly 1,000 car safety seats have been provided through the "Keep 'Em Safe" program and 1,000 more will be given to low-income families through September 2010.

During a recent distribution event in City Heights, Bastida received a convertible baby car seat, a high-back booster, and a low-back booster for her three young children. "This is a great program because they show us how to use the seats correctly," she added.

"Even though most parents understand the need for using a car seat with their young children, many children are still unnecessarily injured in car accidents," said Chairwoman Pam Slater-Price. "Among the factors that contribute to these preventable injuries are car seats used incorrectly or not used at all, children being placed in the wrong type of car seat, and moving children out of a car seat or booster and into regular seat belts at too early an age."

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, child safety seats reduce the risk of death by 71 percent for infants and 54 percent for toddlers.

"The goal of the campaign is to increase proper use of child passenger safety seats and seat belt usage by families," said Christopher J. Murphy, Director of the California Office of Traffic Safety. "The safety presentations include education on the proper installation and use of a child passenger restraint system for children of all ages; seatbelt usage air bag safety and the dangers of leaving children alone in the car."

California law requires that a car safety seat is used until a child is six years of age or weighs 60 pounds. It is also recommended that children under the age of 13 ride in the back seat.

"Using age-appropriate, vehicle safety seats can be a lifesaving decision," said HHS Director Nick Macchione. "Whenever you're on the road, make sure children are safe and secure, no matter how long or short your trip may be."

HHS's Community Action Partnership (CAP) has been administering child safety programs for the last five years and this grant is the result of HHS's efforts to sustain programs that promote health and safety.

For more information about the "Keep 'Em Safe" program, contact the Pacific Safety Council at (888) 846-4200 ext. 110 or visit www.pscsd.com.

###

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY
1700 PACIFIC HIGHWAY, ROOM 207 • SAN DIEGO, CA 92101-2472