

**Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Public Safety and Security
Office of Grants and Research**



**Notice of Solicitation of Applications
for
2023 Car Seat Distribution Program**

March 14, 2023

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Governor**

**Kimberley Driscoll
Lieutenant Governor**

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Executive Director**

I. Introduction

The Office of Grants and Research (OGR) is currently accepting applications from eligible entities for the 2023 Car Seat Distribution Program. Awarded applicants will be provided with car seats for distribution to families in need by certified child passenger safety (CPS) technicians at inspection stations and/or checkup events. This program, funded by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), aims to reduce child passenger injuries and fatalities by ensuring low-income families are provided with free car seats, and caregivers are educated on their proper installation and usage.

OGR is the State Administering Agency for NHTSA's traffic safety grants to reduce roadway crashes, injuries, fatalities, and their associated economic losses in Massachusetts. Requests for car seats will be fulfilled on a **first come, first serve** basis to qualified applicants. The application, car seat price list and order form, and other solicitation-related documents are available at <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/car-seat-distribution-program>.

Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis through July 7, 2023.

II. Background

Nationwide, traffic crashes are a leading cause of death for children aged 12 and under. Size-appropriate car seats installed and used correctly significantly reduce the risk of death and injury to children involved in crashes. However, improper seat installation and restraint misuse are widespread. NHTSA estimates 46 percent of seats are installed incorrectly by parents, and Massachusetts has a 49 percent misuse rate per check data entered into the NDCF from 2018 thru 2022.

Massachusetts state law requires all children riding in passenger motor vehicles to be in a federally- approved child passenger restraint that is properly secured and fastened according to the manufacturer's instructions until they are eight years old or more than 57 inches tall. When children reach the age of 8 and/or outgrow their booster seats, they must wear a seat belt.

III. Eligibility

Massachusetts municipal agencies, not-for-profit hospitals, and 501 (c)(3) organizations serving children and/or families that meet all of the requirements below are eligible to receive free car seats via this opportunity. Applicants must:

- Have at least one certified CPS technician on staff who is currently completing in-person seat checks for your organization.
- Develop an outreach plan to notify low-income families in their coverage area about the availability of car seats and their technicians' ability to assist with the installation. This plan must be detailed in the application.
- Demonstrate need for the seats being requested.

- Be a registered user of the National Digital Car Seat Check Form (NDCF). See [Section VII](#) for more information.
- Have an employee seat belt policy.

Returning applicants who received seats from this program in 2022 and are not up-to-date with submitting check data into the NDCF for seats distributed, will not be eligible to receive additional seats through this 2023 solicitation.



IV. Funding Availability and Timeline

It is estimated that approximately \$300,000 will be made available for this initiative. This solicitation was publicly posted on March 8, 2023. As a rolling process, applications will be accepted at any time through July 7, 2023 and will be reviewed as OGR receives them. OGR estimates that awarded agencies will have their car seat orders fulfilled 3-5 weeks after their application has been received and approved by OGR.

Written questions regarding this solicitation may be submitted via email to Andrea Papa, OGR Program Coordinator, at Andrea.Papa@mass.gov. Questions may be submitted at any time before July 7, 2023, and will be answered as they come in.

V. Car Seat Request Details

Applicants must submit a car seat order form, along with their application, that is based on their projected car seat needs. Each applicant may submit an order valued at up to \$7,500. The order form includes the car seat price list and can be found at <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/car-seat-distribution-program>. If selected to receive car seats under this solicitation, OGR will submit all seat orders and delivery instructions to Mercury Distributing; tracking information may be provided once orders are shipped. Your seats may come in one or multiple shipments, depending on supplier inventory. OGR will do its best to ensure all delivery instructions are adhered to; however, we cannot guarantee that special requests will be met due to driver shortages in the shipping industry. Someone from the recipient organization must be present to accept delivery. If you do not receive the correct order, you must let the delivery driver know. OGR will submit payment for all invoices directly to Mercury Distributing upon delivery and receipt.

Car seat recipients will be responsible for the following seat distribution and compliance guidelines.

Distribution of Seats

This opportunity is not intended to be a general giveaway/free-for-all to the general public. **Selected car seat recipients are required to make substantial efforts to ensure seats go to low-income families and this process must be described in your application.** These efforts may involve partnering with local organizations, including but not limited to food pantries, shelters, churches, Head Start programs, neighborhood health centers, public housing authorities, Boys & Girls Clubs, and Women, Infants, & Children (WIC) offices.

The availability of free seats may not be advertised publicly (e.g., on social media, in press releases). OGR does, however, recommend that selected car seat recipients utilize social media and other media to promote CPS laws/best practices and their CPS program, including the capabilities and availability of technicians.

Seats must be installed into vehicles by or with the help of certified technicians unless the caregiver does not own a vehicle and intends on using the seat for travel in someone else's vehicle. In which case, the technician may provide a pre-registered and unboxed seat to the caregiver and give as much instruction as possible on its proper installation. A check form must still be filled out, with a liability statement signed by the caregiver in such cases.

All seat checks involving the distribution of seats provided by this opportunity must be entered into the National Digital Car Seat Check Form (NDCF) database, with "State Funds" entered into the *Car Seat Donor* field. See [Section VII](#) below for more information.



Selected car seat recipients must distribute all seats at no cost. The car seats may not be part of a fundraiser or raffle and may not be sold.

OGR does not require selected car seat recipients to establish income criteria for car seat distribution. However, selected car seat recipients may establish criteria that must be described in their application and align with the program's purpose.

Car seats must be stored in a secure location.

Compliance and Conditions

- Selected car seat recipients must retain pertinent documents on file (either hard or electronic), including copies of the application packet and paper check forms (if liability statement is signed on paper vs. NDCF).
- Selected car seat recipients are subject to compliance monitoring by OGR staff, including but not limited to site visits
- A selected car seat recipient's failure to comply with any of the requirements outlined in this document may jeopardize eligibility for future OGR grant funds and/or car seat distribution programs.
- Inspection station information will be posted at www.mass.gov/carseats. This website may be broadcasted on OGR's social media platforms and/or mass media outlets.
- OGR cannot guarantee that special delivery instructions will be followed.
- OGR is not responsible for redelivery costs resulting from staff not being present to accept initial delivery.
- Agencies must alert the delivery driver if they did not receive the correct car seat order. Orders cannot be corrected after the driver departs the delivery site.
- Selected car seat recipients must immediately report to OGR if they no longer have a certified technician on staff and must return any undistributed car seats to OGR.

VI. Application Review Process

OGR staff will review and assess all proposals received and determine if the eligibility criteria stated throughout this AGF has been met. It's important that applicants provide detailed answers to each question to justify the need for the seats included in their order.

OGR reserves the right to request modifications from applicants prior to final award selection.

Awards are also dependent on the availability of adequate federal funds. Award decisions are at the discretion of the Executive Director of OGR.

VII. National Digital Car Seat Check Form

All seat checks involving the distribution of seats awarded as a result of this opportunity must be entered into the National Digital Car Seat Check Form (NDCF) database. The NDCF streamlines data collection so that organizations can better monitor trends, track car seat distribution, and educate clients, patients, and/or the public.

Eligible organizations must be registered to use the NDCF. To create an account, visit <https://carseatcheckform.org> and follow the steps listed.

Seat checks can be directly entered into the NDCF database using a phone, tablet, or computer. Checks can also be recorded using the NDCF paper form and then manually entered into the NDCF database. Please visit <https://www.cpsboard.org/ndcf/digital-user-guide> for more information, including tutorial videos.

VIII. Submission Instruction

OGR is only accepting electronically submitted application packets. Complete application packets must be submitted to Andrea.Papa@mass.gov by July 7, 2023 and include the following documents:

- Application (PDF)
- Car Seat Price List+Order Form (Excel)
- Organizational Seat Belt Policy (PDF)