Booster Seat Parent Telephone Survey: Report Summary

Introduction: Despite a large body of research demonstrating the effectiveness of booster seats in preventing injury and death among children, rates of booster seat usage among 4- to 8-year old children remains unacceptably low.

Objective: To examine factors related to the use and non-use of booster seats reported by parents of 4 to 8 year old children in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Method: A random digit computer-assisted telephone interview (CATI) was conducted with parents of children aged 4 to 8 years in Winnipeg, Manitoba in April 2011, to assess booster seat use patterns. The sample consisted of English-speaking adults who were parents of at least one child in the booster seat age range (4-8 years). Parents were asked to respond to a series of questions regarding general demographic information, patterns of booster seat usage, and factors potentially associated with booster seat use and non-use. A total of 136 respondents, providing information on 180 4 to 8 year old children, were surveyed using the CATI procedure.

Results: Child age was significantly associated with the frequency of booster seat use and non-use ($\chi^2 = 33.126$, $p < .001$). As child age increased, booster seat usage tended to decline. While booster seat use was relatively high among 4 to 6 year old children (approximately 90% "Always" using a booster seat), only 63% of 7 year old children and 41% of 8 year old children were "Always" restrained in a booster seat.

The most cited reason for "Never" or "Rarely" using a booster seat centered around the belief that the child was either too big (30.6%) or too small (20.4%) for a booster seat. These parents also reported that they would be more likely to increase booster seat use if it was required by law (81.0%), if they had more information about why booster seats were safer (66.7%), and if everyone used them (42.9%).

Manitoba currently does not have legislation in place mandating booster seat use for children. However, booster seat legislation was significantly related to the frequency of booster seat use ($\chi^2 = 10.104$ $p = 0.039$). Respondents who believed that Manitoba had a law or who were unsure of Manitoba legislation were significantly more likely to report "Always" using a booster seat (71% and 65% booster seat use, respectively) than respondents who were aware of the current lack of booster seat legislation in Manitoba (44% booster seat use).

Conclusions: Although self-reported rates of booster seat use were relatively high in this sample, the marked decrease in booster seat use by parents of 7 to 8 year old children suggests that interventions targeted at increasing booster seat use among older booster aged children are clearly warranted. Public awareness campaigns aimed at clarifying misconceptions regarding age and size requirements for booster seat use along with information on associated safety benefits would likely have a positive impact on rates of booster seat use. Finally, enacting legislation in Manitoba mandating booster seat use for booster seat eligible children would likely not only increase booster seat use in the province, but also help to ensure that booster seat eligible children are afforded the best possible protection against injury and death when travelling on Manitoba roads.

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