



**SAFE  
K:DS**  
MAINE

# 2024 IMPACT REPORT

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Protecting Maine's Children:  
Expanding Safety, Education,  
and Community Impact

[www.safekidsmaine.org](http://www.safekidsmaine.org)

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# About Us

Safe Kids Maine is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to the prevention of unintentional injuries to children through education, empowerment, advocacy, and community engagement. Through targeted outreach efforts, we aim to provide families with the knowledge and resources necessary to minimize the risks and prevent accidental injuries and deaths to children in Maine. Safe Kids Maine is a coalition of the international organization, Safe Kids Worldwide.



## Meet Our Team



### Suzanne Grace

Executive Director  
CPSTI

Suzanne has over 30 years of nonprofit experience and has been a Certified Child Passenger Safety Technician Instructor since 2001. She has led injury prevention programs at children's hospitals and is a former Firefighter and Advanced EMT. Suzanne has a blended family of nine children and eight grandchildren.



### Robert Libby

Treasurer  
CPSTI

Bob is a retired police officer of 29 years. He has been a Certified Child Passenger Safety Technician since 2001 and an Instructor since 2012. He currently works for the Maine Courts, as a Judicial Marshal. Bob is married, has two daughters, and one granddaughter.



### Jeffrey Upton

Board Member  
CPSTI

Jeff was a School Resource Officer for 23 years before retiring as a Lieutenant after 25 years in law enforcement. He has been a Certified Child Passenger Safety Technician Instructor since 2003. Jeff is the Assistant Director of the Maine School Safety Center. He is married and has three sons.



### Jami Gilbert

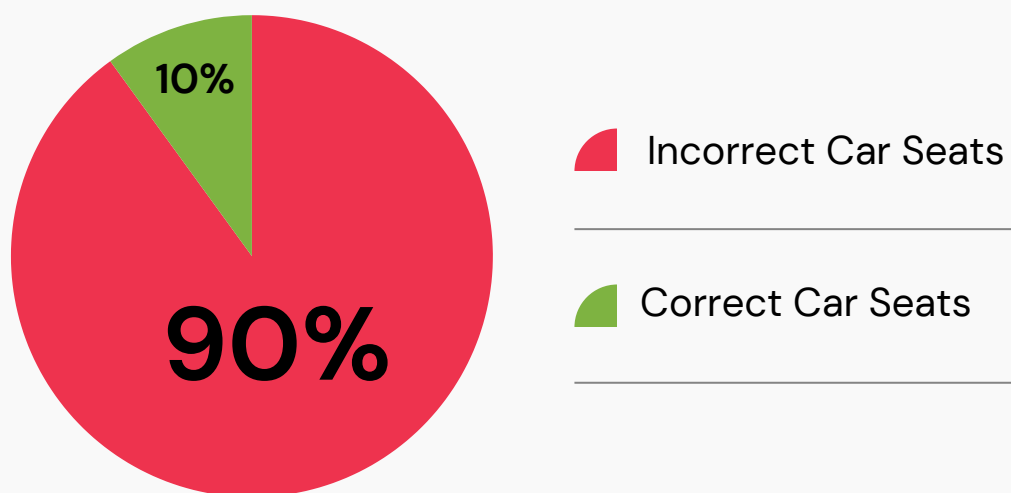
Board Member  
CPST, EMT-B

Jami is the Pediatric Injury Prevention Program Manager at Maine Medical Center Portland and has been a Certified Child Passenger Safety Technician since 2012. She is also an EMT and a CPR Instructor. Jami is married and has one daughter and one son.

# 2024 Car Seat Safety Checks

In 2024, data from car seat safety checks conducted at Safe Kids Maine events revealed a **90% misuse rate**, meaning 9 out of 10 car seats were not installed or used correctly. This statistic is based on hands-on assessments by our Certified Child Passenger Safety Technicians (CPSTs), who check for common errors such as loose installations, incorrect harnessing, and improper seat selection. A misuse rate this high is alarming, as even minor mistakes can significantly reduce a car seat's effectiveness in a crash. With motor vehicle crashes being **a leading cause of childhood injury and death**, this highlights the critical need for ongoing education and outreach to ensure every child in Maine is riding as safely as possible. Through our safety check events, training programs, and community partnerships, we are working to bridge this gap and provide families with the knowledge and resources they need to keep their children safe on the road.

## 2024 Car Seat Safety Check Results





# 2024 Car Seat Safety Checks Continued

Safe Kids Maine's child passenger safety program played a vital role in reaching families and addressing the widespread misuse of car seats. In 2024, we inspected **273 car seats** at our events, working hands-on with **334 parents and caregivers** to ensure their children were properly protected in their car. Among the seats checked, **31% were infant seats, 14% were rear-facing convertible seats, 12% were forward-facing seats, 7% were booster seats, and 7% were children using lap and shoulder seat belts.** Alarming, **75 children arrived at the event completely unrestrained or without a car seat (29%),** highlighting the continued need for outreach and education. Additionally, **9 car seats had either expired or had been involved in a crash,** putting children at serious risk. Even more concerning, **68% of children who arrived in just a seat belt left in a car seat or booster seat,** reinforcing how many children are **prematurely moved** out of the proper restraints and the critical need for continued education and access to safe transportation solutions.



*Preparing for baby's arrival—expectant parents learn proper car seat harnessing from a Certified Child Passenger Safety Technician.*

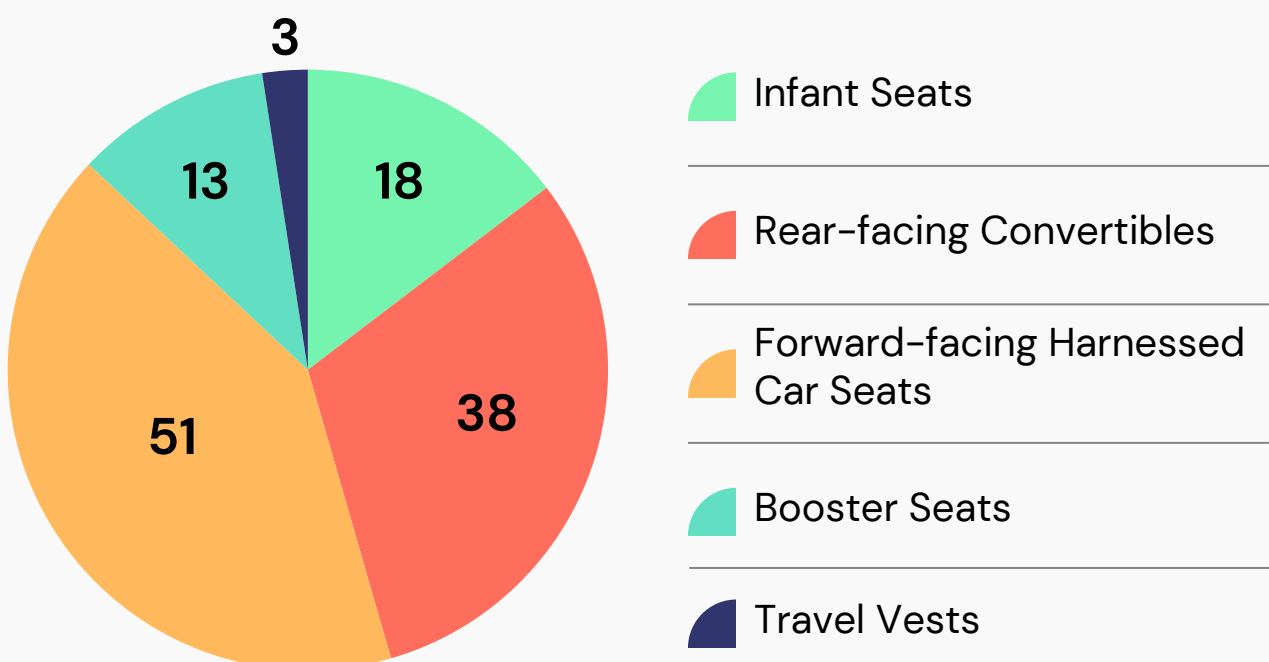
Through strategic partnerships with businesses and community organizations, we expanded our reach by securing funding, event hosting locations, and promotional support through social media and local networks. The most common referral sources were WIC, online searches, and caregivers who happened to see our event signage while driving by.

Our events served **222 children and 69 unborn children**, ensuring that families were prepared to safely transport their babies from day one. A total of **183 vehicles** were checked, with Toyota, Subaru, and Ford being the most common makes.

# Car Seat Support for Underserved Communities

In 2024, Safe Kids Maine provided **123 new car seats to families in need**, ensuring that children from underserved communities had access to the protection they deserve. Families were primarily identified through our partnership with The Opportunity Alliance, which administers WIC and Head Start programs, helping us connect with those most at risk. Research shows that children in low-income households face **higher rates of injury and fatality** in car crashes due to barriers in accessing proper safety equipment and education. Additional referral sources included social service agencies and health care providers.

## Types of Car Seats Distributed





# Car Seat Support for Underserved Families Continued

With funding from **State Farm** through **Safe Kids Worldwide**, along with support from local State Farm agents, we worked to break down these barriers by offering hands-on education and free car seats to families who otherwise could not afford them. While cultural and language differences presented challenges, we prioritized **inclusive outreach and clear communication**, using translated materials, visual demonstrations, and community liaisons to ensure every family left empowered and confident in keeping their child safe. By meeting families where they are—both physically and linguistically—we strengthened trust and created a lasting impact on child passenger safety in Maine.

We were fortunate to have the support of **24 Certified Child Passenger Safety Technicians**, including **3 Instructors**, along with **dedicated volunteers**, all working together to improve child passenger safety. These numbers reinforce the **ongoing need for accessible car seat education and resources**, proving that outreach and community collaboration can make a life-saving difference.



*Proper education is key—A CPST teaches a social worker how to correctly use a car seat before it's provided to a family in need.*

# Car Seat Support for Underserved Families Continued



*This child wasn't quite ready for a booster seat, so a travel vest was the perfect solution for safe travels.*

The impact of this program goes beyond just distributing car seats—it's about **changing behaviors and saving lives**. Every family we served not only received a properly fitted car seat but also hands-on education to ensure they could install and use it correctly. The results of our data reinforce the **critical need for these efforts**, as our inspections continue to show a **90% car seat misuse rate**. This means that without intervention, the vast majority of children are at risk of serious injury in a crash. Many parents and caregivers don't realize their car seat is being used incorrectly until they attend a safety checkup event, highlighting the importance of proactive outreach. By providing both **education and access to safety equipment**, we are directly addressing this issue and working toward a future where every child in Maine can travel as safely as possible, regardless of their family's financial situation. Our program ensures that cost and access are not barriers to safety, giving every child the protection they deserve.



# Community Outreach & Impact

Safe Kids Maine is committed to bringing life-saving injury prevention education and resources directly to families across the state. In 2024, we hosted and participated in **27 outreach events**, partnering with local fire departments, hospitals, businesses, and community organizations to ensure children are traveling, playing, and living as safely as possible. These events allowed us to reach families who may not have otherwise had access to critical **child passenger safety, bicycle safety, and injury prevention education**.

We held **regular car seat safety checks** in communities across Maine, including:

- **Waterville** at Central Maine Chevrolet
- **South Portland** at the South Portland Fire Department
- **Bangor** at Quirk Chevrolet/Motor City
- **Windham** at Windham Fire-Rescue
- **Falmouth** at Falmouth Fire-EMS
- **Auburn** at Emerson Chevrolet

Additionally, we participated in large-scale community events to expand our reach, including:

- **National Night Out** with the Portland Police Department
- **Riverton Community Block Party** with the City of Portland
- **Hampden Children's Day**, where we distributed 100 bike helmets to children, provided hands-on car seat education, and distributed new car seats to families in need

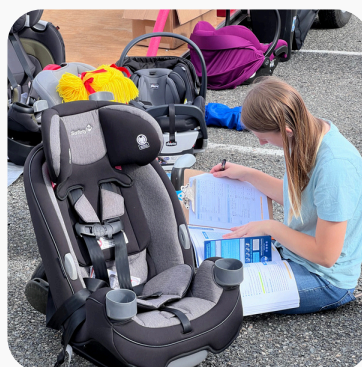


# Community Outreach & Impact Continued

Beyond child passenger safety, we worked to address **other critical safety concerns**. At a special training with Maine Community Integration in Lewiston, we taught **30 families who spoke only Dari and Pashto** how to perform CPR and relieve choking in infants and children. Language barriers often make it difficult for multicultural communities to access safety education, so this event was an important step toward providing inclusive, life-saving information.

We also hosted a **Child Passenger Safety Technician Certification Course in Bangor** for **Northern Light Health and the Children's Miracle Network**, ensuring more professionals are trained to provide expert car seat safety guidance to families. With a **90% car seat misuse rate** in Maine, expanding the number of trained CPSTs is essential in reducing injuries and fatalities from motor vehicle crashes.

Each of these outreach efforts reinforced the **importance of meeting families where they are**—whether at fire stations, car dealerships, community celebrations, or cultural gatherings. By offering **hands-on education, free safety resources, and expert guidance**, we helped caregivers build the skills and confidence they need to protect their children from preventable injuries.



*Training the Next Generation of CPSTs in Bangor.*



# The Power of Partnerships: Strengthening Community Safety Together

Our work would not be possible without the strong partnerships and community support that allow us to extend our reach and impact. As we look ahead, we will continue working to **close safety gaps, increase awareness, and make Maine a safer place for all children.** Safe Kids Maine's success in keeping children safe is made possible through the incredible support of our funding partners and community collaborators. We are deeply grateful to **Central Maine Chevrolet, Northern Light Health, and the Children's Miracle Network, MaineHealth, Emerson Chevrolet, Walmart SparkGood, Versant Power, and State Farm through Safe Kids Worldwide**, whose generosity provides the resources needed to bring life-saving programs to families across the state. Their commitment allows us to distribute car seats to families in need, conduct free car seat safety inspections, and provide essential education that families need to keep their children safe.



# The Power of Partnerships Continued

In addition to our funders, we are fortunate to collaborate with **The Opportunity Alliance**, which includes **WIC** and **Head Start**, the **Maine Department of Health and Human Services**, **Gateway Community Services**, **Maine Medical Center**, **Eastern Maine Medical Center**, **Mercy Hospital**, **South Portland Police VIPS (Volunteers in Police Service)**, **South Portland Fire Department**, **Windham Fire-Rescue**, **Falmouth Fire-EMS**, **Quirk Motor City**, **Michelle Raber State Farm**, **Tricia Zwirner State Farm**, **local healthcare providers**, and **public safety agencies**. These partnerships are critical in **identifying families who need our services**, promoting our events, and ensuring that injury prevention resources reach the communities most at risk. By working together, we are breaking down barriers to safety education and ensuring that **every child in Maine** has access to the protection they deserve.



*State Farm agents and volunteers helped distribute goodie bags to families attending the event.*

We simply **could not do this work alone**. It is through these strong partnerships that we are able to expand our reach, improve program accessibility, and make a lasting impact on childhood injury prevention. We extend our deepest appreciation to **every organization and individual** who has supported our mission, and we look forward to continuing this important work together.



## Proud Program Sponsors



## Proud Program Partners



# Looking Ahead: Expanding Our Impact for a Safer Future

At Safe Kids Maine, our mission is to help more families keep their children safe from **preventable injuries**, and our future plans focus on expanding outreach, increasing accessibility, and strengthening community partnerships.

One of our biggest initiatives is expanding our **Mobile Safety Center (MSC)** to bring critical safety resources directly to communities that lack local access to injury prevention education. The MSC trailer serves as both a **hands-on learning center and a mobile safety store**, offering essential items such as car seats, bike helmets, life jackets, portable cribs, and home safety devices. Through sponsorships and subsidies, we strive to make these resources **free or low-cost for families in need**. To fully realize this vision, we are seeking partners to help us secure a **dedicated truck** to tow the trailer, allowing us to reach even more underserved families across the state.

Alongside the MSC, we are launching new initiatives, including a **bicycle safety program** focused on proper helmet use and safe riding habits, a **safe sleep program** that provides education and portable cribs to families in need, and **water safety outreach** to promote swimming lessons, active supervision, and life jacket use. These efforts will help ensure that children are protected in all aspects of their daily lives.



# Looking Ahead: Expanding Our Impact for a Safer Future Continued



Beyond direct interventions, we are strengthening our community impact by offering **workshops and training programs** for businesses and organizations. Through **lunch-and-learn sessions and employee wellness programs**, we provide practical safety education that empowers parents, caregivers, and professionals to keep children safe.

Additionally, we are building a **multicultural learning hub** on our website, offering educational materials and videos in multiple languages to ensure that safety information is **accessible to all families**, regardless of language or cultural background.

Supporting Safe Kids Maine is more than a contribution—it's a **commitment to protecting children and strengthening communities**. Businesses and organizations that partner with us will be recognized as leaders in child safety, with branding opportunities in event promotions, social media, and public outreach. This partnership not only demonstrates **corporate responsibility** but also fosters **goodwill among employees, customers, and the families we serve**.





# Thank You

As we reflect on 2024, Safe Kids Maine remains committed to **preventing childhood injuries and ensuring that every child has the opportunity to grow up safely.** Through hands-on education, community partnerships, and expanded outreach efforts, we have made a measurable impact in keeping families informed and empowered. However, our work is far from done. With **90% of car seats misused, preventable injuries remaining a leading cause of harm to children, and barriers to safety still existing for many families,** we must continue to grow, adapt, and find new ways to reach those who need us most.

Looking ahead, we are excited to expand our programs, strengthen our collaborations, and develop innovative solutions to improve safety across Maine. From **increasing access to car seat education and distribution** to launching **new initiatives in bicycle safety, safe sleep, and water safety,** we remain dedicated to serving families where they are and providing **equitable access to life-saving resources.** The impact of these programs extends far beyond a single event. None of this would be possible without the **generous support of our partners, volunteers, and donors,** who share in our mission and help make these programs a reality. We welcome businesses, community groups, and individuals to join us—whether through sponsorship, collaboration, or volunteering. With your support, we can create a **safer future where children** can grow, explore, and thrive.



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