

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

INTERNATIONAL
STUDENT AND
SCHOLAR SERVICES

Office of International Programs



FAMILY RESOURCE GUIDE

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SAFETY AND TRANSPORTATION

CAR SEAT INFORMATION

Minnesota's Child Passenger Restraint law requires the following:

- Children under four years of age must be secured in a safety seat that meets federal safety standards.
- Safety seats must be installed and used according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Child must be secured in the safety seat.
- Seat must be secured to the vehicle.
- Infants (under 20 pounds and under one year of age) must be in a rear-facing safety seat.

The following guidelines are recommended when considering how to safely drive with your children in the vehicle:

Babies under 1 year old and under 20 pounds

Use a car seat that faces towards the rear of the car. The baby should always ride in the back seat of the car. Use until the child outgrows the car seat (the baby's head comes within 1 inch of the top of the car seat's shell). When the baby is 1 year old and weighs 20 pounds or more, you can move the child to a forward-facing car seat.

Children 1-4 years old and over 20 pounds

Use a car seat that faces forward (towards the front of the car). The child should ride in the back seat of the car. Use until the child outgrows the car seat (when ears reach the top of the seat, when shoulders are above the top slots, or when child reaches the upper weight limit, usually 40 pounds). Then move the child to a booster seat.

Children 4-10 years old

A booster seat makes an adult safety belt fit correctly. Most children under 8 years old are not big enough to fit the adult safety belt properly. Children using booster seats should sit in the back seat of the car. Use a booster seat until the child reaches the upper weight limit specified on the booster seat or until the child can sit comfortably without slouching on the vehicle seat. Most children do not fit the adult belt until ages 8 to 10.

Children 10-12 years old

Children can use an adult safety belt if they can sit comfortably without slouching on the vehicle seat. Test for proper fit by having the child slide its bottom on the back of the seat. Knees should bend comfortably over the edge of the seat and the child's feet should touch the floor. Children should continue to sit in the back seat of the car until they are 13 years old.

For more information on car seat safety, please visit the following websites:

Minnesota Office of Traffic Safety: Child Passenger Safety Program

This website contains general information concerning the Child Passenger Safety Program, including information on car seats, safety belts, and Minnesota laws.

www.buckleupkids.state.mn.us

Buckle up Kids! A guide for choosing the right child safety restraint and instructions for correct use.

[www.dps.state.mn.us/ots/resource_catalog/images/full_brochures/buckleupkids%20\(eng\).pdf](http://www.dps.state.mn.us/ots/resource_catalog/images/full_brochures/buckleupkids%20(eng).pdf)

The website below lists car seat inspection clinics, distribution programs, and child safety seat specialists in Minnesota.

www.buckleupkids.state.mn.us/clinics_distribution.asp

CHILD SAFETY

Living in a new country may make your children feel uncomfortable or unsafe. On the other hand, a new place can be exciting, with lots of new things to see and do. Below are some tips for parents to help their children stay safe in the U.S.

Safety at home

- Children should know their full name, home phone number and how to use the telephone. Post your contact information where children will see it. Your contact information can include your office phone number, your cell phone number, your pager number, etc.
- Children should have a trusted adult to call if they're scared or have an emergency. This person could be a relative, such as a grandparent, a neighbor, or a close family friend.
- Choose babysitters with care. Obtain references from family, friends, and neighbors. Once you have chosen the caregiver, drop in unexpectedly to see how your children are doing. Ask your children how the experience with the caregiver was and listen carefully to their responses.

Safety in the neighborhood

- Make a list with your children of their neighborhood boundaries, choosing significant landmarks.
- Interact regularly with your neighbors. Tell your children whose

homes they are allowed to visit.

- Don't drop your children off alone at malls, movie theaters, video arcades, or parks.
- Teach your children that adults should not approach children for help or directions. Tell your children that if they are approached by an adult, they should stay alert because the adult may intend to harm them instead.
- Never leave children unattended in an automobile. Children should never hitchhike or approach a car when they don't know and trust the driver.
- Children should never go anywhere with anyone without getting your permission first.

Safety at school

- Be careful when you put your child's name on clothing, backpacks, lunch boxes or bicycle license plates. If a child's name is visible, it may put them on a "first name" basis with an abductor.
- Walk the route to and from school with your children, pointing out landmarks and safe places to go if they're being followed or need help. Make a map with your children showing acceptable routes to school, using main roads and avoiding shortcuts or isolated areas. If your children take a bus, visit the bus stop with them and make sure they know which bus to ride.

General safety tips for parents

- Make sure you know where each of your children is at all times. Know your children's friends and be clear with your children about the places and homes they may visit. Make it a rule for your children to check in with you when they arrive at or depart from a particular location and when there is a change in plans. You should also let them know when you're running late or if your plans have changed so they can see the rule is for safety purposes and not being used to "check up" on them.
- Never leave children unattended in an automobile, whether it is running or not. Children should never be left unsupervised or allowed to spend time alone or with others in automobiles, as the potential dangers to their safety outweigh any perceived convenience or "fun." Remind children to never hitchhike, approach a car or engage in a conversation with anyone within

a car they do not know and trust, or go anywhere with anyone without getting your permission first.

- Be involved in your children’s activities. As an active participant, you’ll have a better opportunity to observe how the adults in charge interact with your children. If you are concerned about anyone’s behavior, take it up with the sponsoring organization.
- Listen to your children. Pay attention if they tell you they don’t want to be with someone or go somewhere. This may be an indication of more than a personality conflict or lack of interest in the activity or event.
- Notice when anyone shows one or all of your children a great deal of attention or begins giving them gifts. Take the time to talk to your children about the person and find out why the person is acting in this way.
- Teach your children they have the right to say “No” to any unwelcome, uncomfortable, or confusing touch or actions by others and to get out of those situations as quickly as possible. If avoidance is not an option, children should be taught to kick, scream, and resist. When in such a situation, teach them to loudly yell that the person is not their father / mother / guardian and then immediately tell you if this happens. Reassure them that you’re there to help and it is okay to tell you anything.
- Be sensitive to any changes in your children’s behavior or attitude. Encourage open communication and learn how to be an active listener. Look and listen for small cues and clues that something may be troubling your children, because children are not always comfortable disclosing disturbing event or feelings. This may be because they are concerned about your reaction to their problems. If your children do confide problems to you, strive to remain calm, uncritical, and nonjudgmental. Listen compassionately to their concern and work with them to get the help they need to resolve the problem.
- Be sure to screen babysitters and caregivers. Many states now have a public registry that allows parents and guardians to check out individuals for prior criminal records and sex offenses. Minnesota’s website is www.doc.state.mn.us/search/default.htm. Check out references with other families who have used the caregiver or babysitter. Once you have chosen the caregiver, drop in unexpectedly to see how your children are going. Ask your children

how the experience with the caregiver was and listen carefully to the responses.

- Practice basic safety skills with your children. Make an outing to a mall or park an experience in which you can teach children about safety. They can practice checking with you, using pay telephones, going to the restroom with a friend, and locating the adults who can help if they need assistance. Remember, allowing your children to wear clothing or carry items in public on which their name is displayed can bring about unwelcome attention from inappropriate people who may be looking for a way to start a conversation with your children.
- Remember there is no substitute for your attention and supervision. Being available and taking time to really know and listen to your children helps build feelings of safety and security.

TRANSPORTATION

For general information on the bus system, the light rail, cars, taxis, and biking, please see the International Student Handbook: www.iss.umn.edu/new/HandBook/8.pdf

Information especially for families and children

On the bus and the light rail

Children ages 5 and under ride free (limit 3 children) during all hours when accompanied by a paid fare. Youth (ages 6-12) qualify for a reduced fare during non-rush hours. Rush hours are Monday – Friday, 6:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. – 6:30 p.m. Please tell the driver before you pay your fare if you qualify for a reduced fare.

If you're traveling with children, make sure they stay seated for the whole trip. If you have a stroller and are riding the bus, please make sure that you fold it up before boarding the bus so it doesn't block the aisle. Folding your stroller not only makes it easier for other customers to get on and off the bus, but it also makes the ride safer for the child. A child in a stroller runs the risk of being injured as a result of sudden movements.

On a bike

Minnesota Department of Transportation recommends always wearing a helmet when riding your bike. Remember that this includes children as well. Bicyclists are required to obey the same road rules as motorists.

Buying a car

Buying a new car

Look at several different cars and talk with many automobile dealers to find the best buy. If possible, bring someone with you who is knowledgeable about cars. Taking a test drive is also a good idea. Sometimes you can get a lower price on a new car at the end of the year when next year's model has come out for sale.

Buying a used car

Automobile dealers also sell used cars, as do private individuals. The price is somewhat negotiable. Find used cars for sale in the classified ads of newspapers under "Autos for Sale." Beware: buying an inexpensive old car or one in poor condition may actually cost you more money because repairs can be very expensive, especially if you have a large deductible on your car insurance.

Renting a car

Rental car agencies are listed in the Yellow Pages telephone directory under "Auto Renting." Agencies vary in types of cars available and in price, so it's a good idea to check several companies. Rental car agencies require customers to use a credit card to pay the rental charge.

Driving a car

Checklist for driving in Minnesota:

- All drivers must have a driver's license that is valid in Minnesota
- All cars must be registered
- All cars must be insured
- All drivers must be covered on a car insurance policy

Driver's licenses

Anyone driving a car in the state of Minnesota must have a valid driver's license. If your driver's license was issued in your home country, you must also have an international driver's license. The international driver's license is available only from the country that issued your driver's license; it cannot be obtained in the United States (unless you have a driver's license issued by a U.S. state). If you do not have an international or U.S. driver's license, you must get a Minnesota driver's license. This requires both a written (rules-of-the-road) test and a behind-the-wheel driving examination. If you have a valid driver's license from another state in the U.S. or Canada only the written test and eye exam are required. You have 60 days in which to get the Minnesota driver's license. You have to study for these tests, and you should get a copy of the Minnesota Driver's Manual. For further information, locations of examinations stations,

and for a Minnesota Driver's Manual, call the State of Minnesota, Driver's License Information at (651) 296-6911. Or view their website at www.dps.state.mn.us

Vehicle registration

All vehicles (cars, trucks, vans, etc.) must be registered with the State of Minnesota. There is a registration fee for this, and it varies depending on the type of vehicle you own and its age. You must register your car within 60 days of arriving in Minnesota, or, if you buy a car in Minnesota, you must register it within 10 days. The only exception to this law is if you expect to stay in Minnesota for less than one year and have a valid driver's license issued to you from another state. When you register your car, you must provide proof that you have insurance. For information, call the Motor Vehicle Division at (651) 296-6911.

Insurance

It is Minnesota state law that all drivers must have insurance coverage for Liability, Uninsured Motorist, and Personal Injury Protection. The following explains the various types of insurance available:

Liability: pays for injuries or damages to someone else if your car hits another person or the property of another person. It does not cover injury to yourself or your property.

Uninsured Motorist: pays for your injuries and car damages if you are in an accident with an uninsured motorist.

Personal Injury Protection: pays for your personal injuries if you are in an accident

Collision: (optional) pays for damages to your car from an accident

Comprehensive: (optional) pays for damage to your car from theft, fire, storm, damage, or hitting an animal

All types of insurance coverage have a "deductible": an amount you are required to pay before the insurance company will pay anything. For example, if you have \$100 deductible coverage and damage from an accident is \$450, you will have to pay \$100 and the insurance company will pay \$350.

To buy insurance

Look in the Yellow Pages of the telephone directory under "Auto Insurance" and call insurance agents that do business in Minnesota. Check with several agencies to see which has the best price for your situation.

Motorcycle insurance coverage and license

Insurance coverage is mandatory for all motorcycles, and special licenses are required for driving them.