Economic Factors

Given the relatively low expense, child safety seat programs for education or enforcement are highly cost-effective.[513] NHTSA has provided consistent although limited funding for such programs for some time.[514]

Conclusion

Even when parents select the appropriate child safety seat, improper installation or misuse is common.[515] Increased funding for parent and community education, as well as increased enforcement, are likely to increase the age- and size-appropriate use of child restraint systems.[516]

3.7.3 Conclusions: Increase Use of Age-Appropriate Child Safety Seats and Booster Seats

There is considerable room for improvement in the rate of use of child restraints that provide the most protection for children based on their size and age. Giving incentives for states to adopt uniform child restraint laws and increasing funding for education and enforcement are very likely to increase appropriate child restraint use and prevent child passenger fatalities and injuries.

3.8 Conclusions for Chapter 3

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of fatality and injury for Americans age 1 to 34. In 2009, traffic-related crashes resulted in 33,808 deaths and over 2 million injuries.

DUI crash fatalities decreased from 53 percent all traffic fatalities in 1982 to 32 percent in 2009 largely due to governmental policies. Significant additional savings in lives and dollars could be achieved through expanding interlock programs, increasing the use of sobriety checkpoint programs, maintaining the minimum drinking age law at 21 and expanding enforcement, and strengthening the implementation and enforcement of zero-tolerance laws for underage drivers.

Distracted driving increases crash risk—in the case of cell phone use, to rates approximating those for DUI. Three policies at the federal level have potential for reducing this risk: incentive grants to states to pass rigorous and effective bans on cell phone use, grants to support high-visibility enforcement of cell phone bans, and support for distracted driving education programs in conjunction with enforcement.

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513 Ibid.

514 United States Department of Transportation. 1998. *TEA-21: A Summary – Improving Safety*. Available at: http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/Tea21/sumsafe.htm [accessed September 17, 2010].

515 Decina, L.E., Lococo, K.H. and Block, A.W. 2005. *Misuse of Child Restraints: Results of a Workshop to Review Field Data Results.* Traffic Safety Facts, Research Note. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. DOT HS 809 851.

516 Pierce, S.E., Mundt, M.P., Peterson, N.M. and Katcher, M.L. 2005. Improving Awareness and Use of Booster Seats in Head Start Families. *Wisconsin Medical Journal* 104 (1): 46-51.

Both younger (age 21 and under) and older (age 65 and over) drivers experience disproportionately high rates of fatalities and traffic crash risks. Graduated driver licensing (GDL) laws benefit younger drivers, while ensuring compliance and strengthening testing and restriction can further reduce youth fatalities. Although limited research has been conducted regarding implementation of driver assessment programs for older drivers, findings suggest that they reduce crash and fatality risks.

Speeding is a very common behavior and a major contributor to traffic crashes. Automated speed enforcement (ASE) is very effective at cutting speeds and fatalities, but it faces public resistance unless it is deployed as a revenue-neutral safety measure designed around the principals of general deterrence. Traffic calming can be effective on the local level, especially for pedestrian and bicycle safety.

Seat belt use has increased from about 10 percent in 1982 to about 85 percent in 2010, due to efforts over the past several decades, preventing thousands of fatal and non-fatal injuries. However, there is great potential for further gains if the national rate were to be raised to 90 percent overall. Expanding federal incentive programs to encourage states to adopt and enforce primary seat belt laws and maintaining and increasing federal funding for enhanced enforcement and education programs would result in additional savings of thousands of lives and injuries and billions in associated yearly costs.

While more children are being properly restrained, misuse is still a major problem, especially among children age 1 and above. Giving states incentives to adopt uniform child restraint laws and usage standards, while increasing funding for education and enforcement is likely to increase appropriate child restraint usage and reduce traffic fatalities and injuries among child passengers.