



August 17, 2012

Dear Colleagues:

Every summer, we hear about the tragic deaths and serious injuries to children who suffer heatstroke after being left unattended in vehicles. Since 1998, there have been at least 550 deaths in America because an adult forgot about a young child in a vehicle—with 23 lives lost this year alone. Last week, we witnessed the worst week on record for these tragedies with eight children dying from heatstroke in hot vehicles.

The good news is these tragedies are 100 percent preventable—and your program can help.

While parents and family caregivers will always be the first line of defense in preventing child heatstroke in hot cars, everyone in our communities has a role to play. That's why the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration stepped up efforts to raise public awareness on the issue last year and has partnered with Safe Kids Worldwide this summer on a new campaign called "Where's baby? Look before you lock." Safety tips for families and other caregivers, media outreach materials, posters, and other campaign materials are available at www.SaferCar.gov/heatstroke.

Now, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is helping this campaign reach another critical audience: early care and education providers like you. We hope you will support the "Look Before You Lock" campaign in the following ways:

First, as you know, you should always follow local, state, and federal transportation safety regulations to ensure no child is ever left alone in a vehicle. The federal Head Start transportation safety regulations can be found at [Head Start Regulations](http://www.hhs.gov/eclkc/ohs/hslc/standards/Head%20Start%20Requirements/1310).¹ Many of you transport children in vans and buses. It is critical that you follow safety protocols, including making sure that the driver checks every seat - every time - to make sure that all of the children are out of the vehicle before parking and locking up.

Second, we urge you to use the voluntary pledge appended to this letter with each family you serve. The pledge asks both caregivers and parents to immediately inform each other if a child does not arrive at home or at an early care and education center as expected at the regularly scheduled hour. The pledge template is also available at [Look Before You Lock pledge](http://www.hhs.gov/eclkc/ohs/hslc/standards/Head%20Start%20Requirements/1310).²

¹ See <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/standards/Head%20Start%20Requirements/1310>

² See <http://transition.acf.hhs.gov/programs/occ/news/look-before-you-lock-pledge>

This simple step of ensuring that adults are notified when a child is not where he or she is expected to be can be all that it takes for a child to be found in a locked car in time to prevent a tragedy.

Third, we encourage you to take advantage of the nationwide training series for Head Start and other early child care and education providers that HHS's Administration for Children and Families will be launching over the next year. The training will focus on overall child health and safety—with a specific emphasis on transportation safety—and will include presentations, webinars, and training materials available to both early care and education programs and the public.

Finally, we hope you will take advantage of the "Look Before You Lock" campaign materials and share them with your staff, families, and local communities.

Ultimately, everyone can help keep our children safe from the dangers of heatstroke—including program directors, teachers, staff, drivers, and parents. Please join us in spreading the word about child heatstroke in hot cars, and remind everyone in your community to "Look Before You Lock." Together, we can ensure we never again face a week like the last one.

Thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,



Ray LaHood
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation



Kathleen Sebelius
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Enclosure