

## **CPS Technicians – Helping Keep Your Children Safe Script**

OSF HealthCare Newsroom

Shelli Dankoff – Media Relations Coordinator

May is Child Passenger Safety Technician (CPST) month. What exactly is a CPST? They are perhaps some of the most important people when it comes to helping keep your child safe while riding in a vehicle.

There are over 40,000 certified Child Passenger Safety Technicians nationwide, including three who work in the advocacy department at OSF HealthCare Children's Hospital of Illinois in Peoria.

A CPST undergoes extensive training over four days - learning how to install all types of child passenger safety seats in any type of motor vehicle. They also learn how to share that knowledge through community presentations and child safety seat checks where parents and caregivers receive education and hands-on assistance with the proper use of child restraint systems and seat belts.

According to statistics from Safe Kids, more than 73% of children nationwide are improperly restrained or their seats incorrectly installed. The Children's Hospital of Illinois techs put that number closer to 90%, based on what they see. And they admit before they became certified CPSTs, they, too, were doing it wrong.

### **SOT STEPHANIE MILES (Program Coordinator, Advocacy Department – OSF HealthCare Children's Hospital of Illinois)**

(My children were in their car seats wrong and my car seats were installed incorrectly. And my heart started to pound. The minute I got home I started to fix those car seats. Kind of blamed it on my husband a little because he put them in! But it got me to thinking, we need more technicians because we want children to be travelling safely :23)

Anyone who is interested in helping children, especially agencies, day care providers - anyone who deals extensively with children - are good candidates for the course.

Some of the biggest issues seen by CPSTs: The shoulder harnesses are improperly positioned with the chest clip too low on the child or the harnesses are not snug enough. Chest clips need to be level with the child's chest and you should not be able to pinch any of the webbing in the straps if the child is properly secured.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends parents use rear-facing seats until a child is at least 2 or reaches the maximum height and weight indicated by the seat manufacturer.

In an accident, the risk of injury for an improperly restrained infant or child, or one in an incorrect car seat – or none at all – can be significant.

### **SOT GINGER STREITMATTER (Program Coordinator, Advocacy Department – OSF HealthCare Children's Hospital of Illinois)**

(There are lasting head, neck and spinal injuries because a child wasn't restrained properly. So they might get the whiplash, they may hit their head on the seat in front of them. :12)

Streitmatter adds they often hear parents say their children are uncomfortable with the straps tightly secured. That's why it's important to secure them properly from birth so a child doesn't know differently.

To learn more about becoming a certified Child Passenger Safety Technician, or to find a class in your area, visit <http://cert.safekids.org/>

A list of OSF HealthCare Children's Hospital of Illinois car seat safety checks can be found [here](#).