



# First Step Family Support Center

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## FIRST STEP FAMILY SUPPORTCENTER RECEIVES GRANT TO ADD CHILD PASSENGER SAFETY PROGRAM

First Step Family Support Center has been awarded a \$5,000 grant from the Washington Traffic Safety Commission in order to add the Child Passenger Safety Program to its menu of services designed to promote the healthy development of children and families in Clallam County.

Port Angeles families in need of new and safe car seats for their children are eligible for this program. Pregnant women on Medicaid and families whose children are on Apple Health are encouraged to apply for a free car seat. Approximately 70 car seats will be distributed and, those who do receive car seats will be trained on how to properly install, maintain, and use them.

“We at First Step believe that parents are their child’s first and most important, teacher, protector, and advocate,” said Nita Lynn, First Step’s executive director. “Therefore when we help parents get the tools they need to protect their children and help their children thrive, we are investing in our community’s future.”

In the United States during 2011, more than 650 children ages 12 years and younger died in motor vehicle crashes, and more than 148,000 were injured, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). A one-year CDC study found that 618,000 children ages zero to 12 years old rode in a vehicle without the use of a child safety seat, booster seat, or seat belt at least some of the time. Of those children who died in a crash in 2011, 33 percent were not even buckled. The CDC also found that 72 percent of nearly 3,500 observed children were riding in a car seat or booster seat incorrectly, which increased their risk of injury during a crash.

“Most parents and caregivers know that they need car seats and booster seats for their children, but unfortunately the cost of providing this important equipment is either out of reach for some, or puts a tremendous financial burden on already stressed families,” Lynn said.

Participating low-income families will receive a convertible car seat to be used as a rear-facing seat for infants until the child faces the front and is 65 pounds. “These car seats typically retail for around \$100, which is a significant investment for struggling families,” Lynn said. “We are excited to remove these barriers for some local families.”

The Clallam County Sheriff’s Department notified First Step about this grant opportunity. First Step’s Child Passenger Safety is the only program of its kind currently being offered in Port Angeles. The Sequim Police Department offers a similar service to Sequim residents. First Step’s program is open to qualified Clallam County families.

“We are currently seeking community partners, including interested residents, business owners, and other agencies in order to expand Child Passenger Safety as a regular, self-sustaining program,” Lynn said. “This grant is a terrific starting point, and we hope that the community will embrace it and help it grow so even more Clallam County children will become safe passengers on our streets.”

First Step Family Support Center, a United Way community partner agency, served nearly 5,000 primarily low-income adults and children last year through its Drop-In Centers located in Port Angeles and Sequim, Parents As Teachers Home-Visiting Programs, Parent-Child Assistance Program, First Books, Parenting Education Classes, Kaleidoscope Play & Learn Groups, Safe Beds for Healthy Babies, and Summer Adventure Camp.

For more information about this program or First Step, please call Amber Hosken at First Step Family Support Center, 360-457-8355.

