



# Lombard Police Department Child Safety Seat Program Sustainability

*Addressing the Department's Child Safety Seat Program Needs*

## **BACKGROUND**

The Traffic Safety Unit (TSU) maintains an active child safety seat inspection and installation program. Since 2009, TSU has inspected and/or installed over one thousand child safety seats. Over three hundred citations have been issued by LPD for violations of the Child Passenger Protection Act since November of 2011. When officers encounter violations of the Child Passenger Protection Act they very often find that the violator has no car seat for the child or has an unsafe car seat. This presents a problem for the officer because without intervention, the violator drives off with a citation and a child who is still not safely restrained.

Prior to 2013, LPD made sporadic purchases of child safety seats in order to safely transport children in departmental vehicles as well as provide them to violators when circumstances warranted it. Many of the violators who were given child safety seats were indigent.

In FY2013 LPD received a child safety seat grant for one year from the Illinois Department of Transportation. That grant provided funds to TSU for the purchase of child safety seats to provide to members of the public at no cost, as long as they attended a short training class given by members of TSU. Approximately thirty child safety seats were purchased under the grant at an average cost of \$36.00 each. These seats were purchased at significant discounts from Target, Walmart, and BabiesRUs.

In 2011, Illinois passed a law allowing first time offenders of the Child Passenger Protection Act to avoid a conviction and fines if they provided the court proof that they possessed an approved Child Safety Seat as well as proof that they completed an instructional course on the installation of Child Safety Seats. TSU officers have taught 15 of these classes since the law was changed and demand for them is increasing. LPD has not charged any fees for these classes. Many of the attendees are not residents of the Village of Lombard. There are not many law enforcement agencies in our area that offer the classes.

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## **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

LPD's stock of child safety seats has been depleted. The only remaining seats are needed for departmental use. More seats need to be purchased, but the current budget climate makes their purchase a low priority.

In addition to the seats that are needed, there is a cost to the department associated with the time TSU officers spend teaching these classes. TSU officers are tasked with a wide array of duties and the child safety seat classes make them unavailable for other duties for the duration of each class. Classes are usually taught by one or two officers with preparation and instruction taking at least one hour.

## **PROPOSED SOLUTION**

The solution to the problem statement that is being proposed is the charging of a \$25.00 administrative fee to attendees of the child safety seat instructional course who are attending as first time offenders to avoid conviction in court. Attendance at these classes ranges widely from as little as one person (class given in LPD lobby) to as many as fourteen people or more. The administrative fees collected could be used to purchase child safety seats for the department as well as recoup some of the costs of manpower dedicated to the instruction of these courses.

The proposed fee is not excessive. It is far smaller than the fine of \$120 plus court costs faced by offenders who do not attend the class.

A variation of this solution would be to waive the administrative fee for village residents (after providing proof of residency) due to the fact that many of the class attendees are not residents of the Village.

If the proposed solution had been in place in 2014, the Department's collection of administrative fees for these classes would have allowed the purchase of fourteen car seats.

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## **CONCLUSION**

The Lombard Police Department provides a high level of service to the community in the area of child passenger safety. The adoption of the proposed solution would allow the LPD to maintain or even increase that level of service and help to provide child safety seats to those in need.