Motor vehicle crashes were the leading cause of injury deaths among Nebraska children, contributing to the deaths of 50 children each year, on average, according to information from the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services.

“Some of these deaths may have been prevented if children were properly restrained in approved car safety seats or properly wearing seat belts, and transported in the back seat,” said Dr. Joann Schaefer, Chief Medical Officer.

Safe Kids Nebraska offers these five tips for parents and caregivers to keep kids safe:

Number 1: Kids ages 0-2: The safety seat should face the rear of the car until they reach the highest weight or height allowed by the car seat.

Number 2: Kids age 2 or older: Use a forward-facing seat with a harness for as long as possible, until they outgrow the seat’s height or weight limits.

Number 3: Once kids outgrow a forward-facing seat with a harness, they should use a booster until the lap-and-shoulder seat belt fits correctly, usually at 4 feet 9 inches in height.

Using booster seats protects children from seat belt injuries to the stomach and from being ejected in a crash. Children age 4 to 8 who use booster seats are 59 percent less likely to be injured in a car crash than children who are restrained only by a seat belt.

Number 4: When kids are old enough and large enough to use the vehicle seat belt alone, they should always use lap-and-shoulder seat belts.

Number 5: All kids under 13 years of age should be restrained in the rear seat.

For more information about child passenger safety in Nebraska, visit www.safekidsnebraska.org or the Nebraska Office of Highway Safety at www.dor.state.ne.us/nohs/cps.html