



Dear Fellow Health Professional:

Over the past several decades, we have helped to achieve enormous gains in the public's health – from workplace safety to massive reductions in once-common diseases like polio. We have made great progress in traffic safety as well. But we are far from finished.

The *Click It or Ticket/Operation ABC (America Buckles Up Children) May 2004 Mobilization* marks a high point in our push for greater safety belt and child safety seat use. This *Mobilization* is a highly publicized law enforcement effort that gives people more of a reason to buckle up — the increased threat of a traffic ticket. Most people buckle up for safety. But for some people, only the threat of a ticket spurs them to put on a safety belt. In *Click It or Ticket* programs, targeted advertising alerts people to the upcoming law enforcement *Mobilization*, which is supported by tens of thousands of officers from law enforcement agencies in all fifty States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. Not only are tickets issued to unbelted motorists, but the surrounding publicity ensures that people know they are more likely to get a ticket. As of September 2003, the national safety belt use rate stood at 79 percent – a 4 percentage-point gain over the previous year and the result of a very successful May 2003 *Click It or Ticket* Mobilization.

This year's Mobilization will focus on one of the most at-risk populations: teenagers and young adults. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), 7,452 teens ages 16-20, died in fatal crashes in 2003. Teens and young adults are nearly twice as likely to be killed in fatal crashes and three times as likely to be injured in a crash compared to the adult population.

This is the time of year when young people are traveling to proms, vacations, graduations, and home from school. It's also the perfect time for you to spread the "Buckle Up" message. Lap/shoulder safety belts, when used, reduce the risk of fatal injury to front-seat passenger car occupants by 45% and the risk of moderate-to-critical injury by 50%. For light truck occupants, safety belts reduce the risk of fatal injury by 60% and moderate-to-critical injury by 65%.

As a health professional and trusted member of your community, you can encourage safety belt use, thereby saving lives and preventing injuries. This planner contains tools to support you.