Tweens Child Restraint & Vehicle Placement Observation Protocol

1. The lead researcher will designate an appropriate area for you to stand on the sidewalk at each school depending upon where it is easy to view the inside of stopped cars. Generally this means you will position yourself near the chosen location, optimally, with a clear view of cars driving into the school. You should wear your orange vest for safety and to minimize inquiries. Observations will always take place for 1 hour at predetermined times.
2. If questioned while observing, state that you are "just counting cars and safety restraint use." Be polite and courteous. Don't lie, but don't give away the whole purpose of the study in your answer. Usually that short response works just fine. If needed, note that identifying information (such as license plates) is NOT being recorded.
3. Because you may be at sites on your own at times, I feel obligated to make one thing perfectly clear: If at any time you feel uncomfortable (e.g., someone's staring at you and starting to freak you out), just leave. Also, if you are scheduled to collect data and the weather turns ugly, observations should be rescheduled or delayed. Use your best judgment and do not put yourself in danger.
4. Before you begin, complete the top section of your data sheet (e.g., Primary Observer, Secondary Observer, Date, Day of Week, Location, etc.). Once situated, research assistants will wait for cars to enter their line of sight, and then will record information for all children under age 13. For data accuracy, we are concentrating mostly on cars that come to a stop (or slow enough to view with accuracy).
5. If a line of cars forms, move to the end of the line in order to collect data on each child before they un-belt themselves and/or step out of the car. This is important for validity.
6. Write observation number (#1, 2, 3, etc.) in column one. For each child who you judge to be in our target age/grade categories (ages 8-12; 3rd-6th grade), record data. Use a new line for each child. Move from left to right on the data sheet. Do not record data for younger or older children who appear not to be in our targeted range. Base your judgment on child size, age, weight and appearance, NOT on type of restraint used.
7. For cars where children are CLEARLY in the vehicle but visibility is limited (e.g., tinted windows, another car in the way) and a determination regarding seat use is not possible, please check the **View Obstructed column** on your data sheet once for each child in the car that you cannot see and cross through the other variables.
8. Indicate whether the child was wearing a seat belt under **Seat Belt/Restraint Used** by marking **Yes (Y), No (N), Inappropriate (I) or Unclear (U).** If the seat belt/restraint are being used inappropriately (e.g., under the child's arm, behind child's back) then mark **Inappropriate (I)** on the data sheet. If you are unable to view the seat belt or harness straps on the child then mark **Unclear (U).** Note that if the child is considered to be borderline age/size for either a booster seat or belt then the benefit of the doubt will be given and it will be marked as correct, not inappropriate. The goal is to tally restraint use, not misuse. (Misuse requires closer inspection.) For example, a child in a belt who looks only a little small for a belt will be given the benefit of the doubt and marked as yes for seat belt/restraint used. Very small children in belts should be marked as inappropriate.
9. For each child observed (under age 13), indicate if the child was in the **Back Seat (B), Front Seat (F)** or **Front Seat Because the Back Was Full (F/BF)** under the **Seat Placement** column.
10. Indicate in the **Child Ethnicity/Gender column** whether the child was **White (W), Black (B), or Other (O).** For **Gender,** indicate whether the child was **Male (M)** or **Female (F).**
11. If there are multiple children in the observed vehicle, the researcher/assistant will complete steps 6-10 before moving on to the next child.
12. Indicate multiple child observations within a single vehicle by bracketing **(}** the observations under the **Same Vehicle** column.

Additional Information: Data Collection Tips and Decision Points

- If borderline give benefit of doubt.
- If a child is in a booster seat, but no belt is being used to restrain the child, consider that unrestrained. If known to be lap belt only, consider belt use **Inappropriate (I)**.
- If view obstructed indicate one time for each child in that vehicle and bracket observations under **Same Vehicle**.
- If view obstructed DO NOT mark anything else. Cross through the other variables and move to the next line on the data sheet. Example: View Obst. ~~Y N U Y N I U BO SB Y N U B F F/BF W B O M F Y N~~
- Sports car and tiny cars may only have 2 seats in the back. DO NOT assume there is a middle back seat. If the two backseats are full and there is a child in the front, mark in **Front Because Back is Full** under **Seat Placement** column. However, for obvious cars you know have a middle back seat, mark a front seated child as such.
- If truck with no back seat, mark **Front Because Back is Full.**
- If a truck has a child in a restraint system in the back seat and the vehicle seat is side facing, mark **Inappropriate.**