

STUDENT SAFETY



SEPTEMBER | 2026



**SAFE
KIDS**
GRAND FORKS

**VISION
ZERO**



Altru Health System is proud to serve as the lead agency for Safe Kids Grand Forks. For more information on this and other childhood injury prevention topics, visit safekidsgf.com, call us at 701.780.1489 or email safekid@altru.org.



September has a special “back in the groove” feel, which makes it a great month for safety reminders that match school routines. As practices, playdates, and screen time pick up, everyday choices around sports gear, online rules, babysitting plans, and home fall prevention can make a big difference in keeping students safe. This month, we’re highlighting practical steps families can use right away.

Specialized Rides — Extra Safety for Special Needs

If your student uses an assistive device or has mobility needs, a standard seatbelt or car seat might not fit them safely. Safe Kids experts recommend building a custom transportation plan that protects both the child and their equipment.

- **Secure both pieces.** Students using assistive devices need a plan where both the student and the wheelchair are independently locked down during travel.
- **Know the two options.** Depending on needs, they will either transfer to a vehicle seat with a specialized restraint, or stay in their wheelchair secured by a crash-tested tie-down system.
- **Build your expert team.** Work with a medical team, the equipment manufacturer, and a certified Child Passenger Safety Technician (CPST) with special-needs training.
- **Mix your resources.** For the safest possible setup, combine CDC child passenger safety guidelines with your vehicle’s manual and a local special-needs transit expert.

Back Into the Swing of Things

September is packed with sports practices, games, and school activities - this is a smart month for injury prevention. Safe Kids helps support active youth by encouraging safe play, smart supervision, and practical steps that keep sports fun and safe.

For Families

- Make sure gear fits and is used correctly. Safety equipment only works well when it matches the student for size, fit, and the activity.
- Encourage hydration before, during, and after activity. A well-hydrated athlete is better prepared to play safely.

For Teachers and Staff

- Report and treat injuries, especially head injuries, right away. It is always better to speak up early than to wait too long.
- Use proper warm-up and conditioning. Bodies do better when they are prepared before the action starts.
- Remind students that playing through pain is not safe. “Toughing it out” can turn a small injury into a bigger one.

Sports Safety Is No Coin Toss

Sports are a great way to keep kids healthy and fit, but just like knowing the rules for the game, safety strategies should be a part of the plan for athletes, parents and coaches. For information geared to keep our young athletes safe and ‘in the game’, visit, safekidsgf.com/SportsSafety.html

KEEPING KIDS SAFE AT HOME, AT SCHOOL, AT PLAY, AND ON THE WAY!!!

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SPOTLIGHT

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Online — The Digital Boundary



As the school year kicks into gear, social media and online spaces become a major part of daily life. Smart boundaries are the best protection while navigating the web. Smart habits for online spaces include:

- **Lock Down Privacy:** Never share your home address, passwords, school name, or private photos with anyone online.
- **Follow Family Rules:** Check in with parents about apps, accounts, and posts before signing up.
- **Spot the Scams:** Remember that people online are often not who they say they are in real life.
- **Speak Up Early:** Tell a trusted adult immediately if someone makes you uncomfortable.
- **Use Common Spaces:** Charge and use your devices in shared family rooms - no hiding in your room.

At Play — Pedestrian Safety



Walking to school is a great way to start the day, get some fresh air, and hang out before class. Darker mornings and busy traffic require smarter walker habits including:

- **The One-Earbud Rule:** Keep at least one earbud completely out of your ear while walking so you can hear sirens, electric car motors, and bicycle bells.
- **The Curb Pause:** Make a habit to lock your phone screens and put them completely away before reaching any intersection or crosswalk.
- **The Eye-Contact Test:** Never step into a crosswalk just because the light is green; look directly at the driver in the closest lane to make sure they see you and have stopped.

Safe Around Water — Farm Safety



Fall holds the busiest months of the year on Midwestern farms. While tractors are rolling to finish the harvest, big autumn rains can mix with dirt fields to create massive mud puddles and swollen drainage ditches. These might look like the ultimate muddy playground, but farm runoff water can move surprisingly fast and can trap your boots and make it really hard to move. So, remember:

- **Stay on Solid Ground:** Never play in drainage ditches or massive field puddles. Stick to the gravel driveway or yard areas away from the fields.
- **Wear Bright Neon:** Always wear bright neon colors or safety vests when playing outside so equipment operators and parents can spot you easily.
- **The "Reach and Throw" Rule:** If a pet or friend gets stuck near a pond or ditch, never go out after them. Stay on solid ground, stretch out a long tree branch or throw a rope, and yell loudly for an adult.

At Home — The Floor Fault Fix

Shifting weather, rushed morning schedules, and messy entryways turn floors into major hazard zones. Taking a few seconds to clear a path is a small fix that makes a massive difference in preventing painful falls. Quick trip tip fixes:

- **Clear the Floor:** Keep walkways completely free of loose cords and clutter to eliminate trip hazards.
- **Light Your Path:** Turn on hallway lights or plug-ins so you can clearly see your footing on stairs.
- **Secure Loose Rugs:** Ensure mats and rugs have non-slip backing so they do not slide around.
- **Choose Smart Footwear:** Wear sturdy, closed-toe shoes or grip socks to maintain your balance.
- **Designate Gear Spots:** Put your sports gear, bags, and other belongings away immediately instead of leaving them on the stairs.

Be Ready - ND State Law

Buckling up is the single most important action anyone can do to stay safe in a moving vehicle. If you are a parent, caregiver, childcare provider, on vacation or just about town - knowing the law where you drive is essential. For more information, visit visionzero.nd.gov or safekidsgf.com

Resources: safekidsgf.com | safekids.org/blog/back-school-blog | visionzero.nd.gov

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