

referrals to services that can benefit the family, including developmental follow-up. Parents of preterm infants should also be given adequate information about immunizations with other discharge planning information. With the trend toward earlier discharge, many hospital-based home health care agencies become involved in the follow-up and care of NICU “graduates” in the home. For the parents of an infant being discharged with equipment (such as, an oxygen tank, apnea monitor, or even a ventilator), discharge planning requires multidisciplinary collaborative practice to ensure that the family has not only the appropriate resources but also the available assistance for dealing with the infant's needs. Many communities have organized support groups, including those discussed previously, those designed for parents of infants who require special care because of specific defects or disabilities, and those for parents of multiple births.

Car seat safety is an essential aspect of discharge planning, and infants younger than 37 weeks of gestation should have a period of observation in an appropriate car seat to monitor for possible apnea, bradycardia, and decreased oxygen saturation ([Bull, Engle, Committee on Injury, Violence, and Poison Prevention and the Committee on Fetus and Newborn, et al, 2009](#)) (see [Community Focus](#) box). Several models can be adapted for small infants with the placement of blanket rolls on each side of the infant to support the head and trunk. For adequate support without slumping, the seat back-to-crotch strap distance must be 14 cm (5.5 inches) or less; a small rolled blanket may be placed between the crotch strap and the infant to reduce slouching. The distance from the lower harness strap to the seat bottom should be 25.5 cm (10 inches) or less to decrease the potential for the harness straps to cross the infant's ears ([Howard-Salsman, 2006](#)). The rear-facing position provides support for the head, neck, and back, thereby reducing the stress to the neck and spinal cord in a vehicle crash. Car seat manufacturers must specify recommended minimum and maximum weights for the occupant; therefore, it is important to check the manufacturer's recommendations before purchasing a car seat for a smaller infant. Additional guidelines are available from the American Academy of Pediatrics ([Durbin and Committee on Injury, Violence, and Poison Prevention, 2011](#)). See [Chapter 9](#) for a discussion of infant car restraints and the Parents Central website* for a complete list of