



CARFit

Helping Mature Drivers Find Their Safest Fit

AOTA® The American Occupational Therapy Association, Inc.



AARP®
Driver Safety

Public Relations and Marketing Toolkit



Helping Mature Drivers Find Their Safest Fit



Thank you for volunteering as an Instructor/Event Coordinator in the National CarFit program. This public relations/marketing toolkit will provide everything you need to publicize your events and garner media attention. We're pleased to help and excited to see you succeed as we strive to grow the program from year to year!

As your agency's spokesperson, you'll lead the publicity efforts by educating your local community about CarFit and its importance. We've designed this toolkit to make your job as easy as possible. The enclosed materials will help you raise awareness of the program and elevate your agency's profile in your community. We encourage you to customize these materials to fit the unique needs of your community and the older drivers in which it serves.

Enthusiastic local participation will be a key to our success and overall growth in the program. Feel free to contact us along the way for help, feedback and advice. While this toolkit is designed to give you everything you need to get started, you may run into a unique situation or need additional advice or assistance when an opportunity arises. Please call or email your CarFit Program Administrator at any time.

Getting Started: Your Personal PR "Kit":

No one knows your community better than you do. Enclosed you will find a public relations toolkit to help you turn that knowledge into relationships with members of the local community and the news media.

You'll find everything you need to be successful at telling the story of *why* CarFit is important. Remember, the more publicity you attract, the more awareness and interest there will be in the program. Be sure to customize the materials for your agency or community.

We've included the following materials:

- 1. Media Alert** This document is used to "alert" media to your upcoming CarFit event, providing the facts of "What, Why, When and How" and other essential details. Media Alerts are popular with calendar of event editors.
- 2. Customizable Press Release** The release is a great way to spread the word about your event and inform the media and the local community about the importance of CarFit. This news release is a great way to start spreading the word about the program.
- 3. Template Pitch Emails** We've put together two examples of pitch emails which you can use to reach out to local media to promote your event. In these pitches, it's important to be brief and in a very succinct message add local relevance to the pitch.
- 4. Infographic** A visual representation of CarFit information intended to present information quickly and clearly. Can be used on social media sites and in print.

5. **Key Messages (One Pager)** This document is geared toward specific audiences to help garner support of the CarFit program.
6. **Fact Sheet** Geared specifically for the press, this document can be sent to the media along with your press release. It serves as a great “at-a-glance” overview of the program and media professionals will appreciate the consolidated information. Feel free to add facts about your local agency if you’d like.
7. **How to Build a Media List** To start spreading the word, you’ll need to build a local media list. Before you start publicizing, you need to find out who should receive these materials. This is the first step to getting great publicity, so plan on starting this process as soon as you receive this toolkit.
8. **Media Relations 101** This document will walk you through the best ways to approach the media and give you tips to make sure your pitch and story idea stand out.
9. **Capturing Clips** This document will help you keep track of any media placements you secure and provide information on how to share clips with the CarFit Program Administrators
10. **Social Media Tools** This document provides examples of social media messages to post on Facebook and Twitter.
11. **Copy Style Guide** This document explains the style guide for the CarFit program, including language, logo, poster and banner usage.
12. **Website Tools and Videos** Visit www.car-fit.org for additional tools, such as a series of CarFit promotional videos and a new CarFit program brochure.

Note for AARP Driver Safety Volunteers Please follow the AARP Driver Safety Media Guidelines when coordinating public relations or media outreach on behalf of CarFit. The Media Guidelines state that you must work with your AARP State Office before contacting external media partners, giving interviews, or fielding requests to photograph or film CarFit events. For more information, see the “Media Guidelines” document under the Communication section of Driver Safety Net on the Volunteer Portal <http://volunteers.aarp.org>



Media Alert Sample



MEDIA ALERT

WHAT: *CarFit* is coming to [LOCATION] to offer area senior drivers a free opportunity to check how their cars “fit” them.

Developed by AAA, AARP and the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) partnership, *CarFit*'s trained professionals take older drivers through a 12-point checklist with their vehicle, recommending minor adjustments that help make their cars “fit” better for comfort and safety. An occupational therapist is also on hand to provide information to seniors on how to maintain and strengthen driving health.

WHY: By 2030, there will be an estimated 58.9 million people age 65 and older -that's 1 in 5 people. They're expected to represent 1 in 4 licensed drivers at that time. Personal mobility is critical for healthy aging, but as our bodies change as we age, ill-fitting vehicles can make it uncomfortable and unsafe to drive. Additionally, due to fragility, older drivers have the highest crash death rate per mile of everyone except teenagers. *CarFit* is a tool that can work to help keep seniors safer behind the wheel.

WHO: (Sponsoring/Participating Organizations: AAA, AARP, etc.)

WHEN: (Time, Date, Place)

WHERE: (Location)

CONTACT: (Media spokesperson's name, work and cell phone numbers)

Reporters will be able to interview mobility experts, older drivers, and shoot footage of this event.

Press Release Sample



[LOCATION] CarFit Event Helps Improve Comfort and Safety “Fit” for Senior Drivers

(DATE, CITY, STATE) To help the 10,000 Americans turning 65 every day and all senior drivers find a better “fit” with their cars for comfort and safety, mobility experts are hosting a safety program designed to help older drivers and their families. *CarFit* is national program developed by AAA, AARP and the American Occupational Therapy Association and is designed to give a quick, yet comprehensive check on how well an older driver and their vehicle work together.

[NAME OF ORGANIZATION] will conduct *CarFit* check-ups in **[INSERT CITY]** on **[DATE]** at **[LOCATION]**.

“As we age, changes in our vision, flexibility, strength, range of motion and even size and height may make us less comfortable and reduce our control behind the wheel,” said **[AAA/AARP/AOTA SPOKESPERSON]**. “*CarFit* provides older adults with the tools to understand and apply the safety features of their car.”

At a *CarFit* event, trained volunteers complete a 12-point checklist with each driver. Among the items checked:

- Correct position of driver’s seat
- Driver’s ability to easily reach pedals
- Proper adjustment of mirrors

Occupational therapists are on hand also to provide a consultation, if needed, that will teach drivers how to maintain and improve aspects related to their driving health. The therapist can also provide information to participants addressing individual needs, including information about local community resources on exercise, nutrition and other programs to help keep them safe on the road.

“It is critically important that mature drivers make safety a personal priority,” said **[SPOKESPERSON]**. “Driving today is more difficult than ever because of increased traffic congestion, longer commute distances, new technology and faster speeds. Older drivers can take important measures to mitigate the stress associated with driving.”

Older drivers can also check with their local AAA club or AARP office to take a driver safety refresher course for older road users or look into occupational therapy driving evaluation programs for individualized assessments and recommendations. *CarFit* represents an extension of those classroom programs, and an opportunity for older drivers to make sure their personal vehicles are adjusted to their needs.

Pitch Email Sample #1

Subject line: Older Drivers "Fit" for Safe Driving?

Body of email:

Dear **[First name]**,

Older drivers, often get a bad rap for being a menace on the road, but data about their safe driving practices reveals quite the contrary.

According to a recent survey from AAA, AARP and the American Occupational Therapy Association, nine in 10 older drivers fasten their seat belts when they get behind the wheel and more than a third have taken driver improvement courses.

[Area, City name} seniors can follow the lead of more than 30,000 older drivers from around the country who've participated in *CarFit*, a safety program that runs vehicle owners and their cars through a 12-point checklist to assess the fit of a driver's car for safety settings. Created through a partnership between AAA, AARP and the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA), *CarFit* helps promote conversations between older drivers and their families about driving safety and help seniors improve the "fit" of their vehicles.

[AGENCY] invites you to join us to at the next **[AREA]** *CarFit* event being held on **[DATE]** at **[LOCATION]**.

At the event, you'll be able to talk with senior drivers and see first-hand how trained technicians help aging drivers with the comfort and safety settings in their car including:

- A clear line-of-sight over the steering wheel;
- Adequate space between the front air bag/steering wheel and the driver's breastbone; properly adjusted head restraints;
- Proper positioning on gas and brake pedals;
- Proper seat belt use and fit, and safe positioning of mirrors to minimize blind spots.

If you'd like more information about the event or *CarFit*, I'm happy to add you to our media distribution list. I can also connect you with subject matter experts to discuss how aging affects America's driving population and how intervention measures like *CarFit* can help keep drivers safer behind the wheel.

Thank you for your consideration,

[Name]

[Contact info]

Pitch Email Sample #2

Subject line: Car “Fit” Challenges for Seniors

Body of email:

Dear **[First name]**,

Recent survey findings show that senior drivers experience safety-related “fit” challenges with their cars including:

- Improper distance from steering wheel (59 percent);
- Inadequate views from side mirrors (32 percent);
- Improper seat height (28 percent) and improper head restraint height (21 percent)

The encouraging news is that after a run through *CarFit*, a free driver safety program, 97 percent of participants’ issues were resolved.

CarFit, created through a partnership between AAA, AARP and the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA), helps older drivers by assessing the “fit” of their cars for maximum safety and comfort. **[Area]** seniors have the opportunity to take advantage of a free local *CarFit* event, scheduled for **[date]** at **[location]**. **[More event details here]**

The event also makes for a good opportunity for local media to talk with senior driver experts and discuss the challenges faced by millions of American families with aging loved ones who continue to drive and want to remain mobile.

For more information about the event or the *CarFit* program, please visit www.Car-Fit.org or contact me directly.

Thanks for your consideration,

[Name]

[Contact info]

How Older Drivers Fit in Their Vehicles*



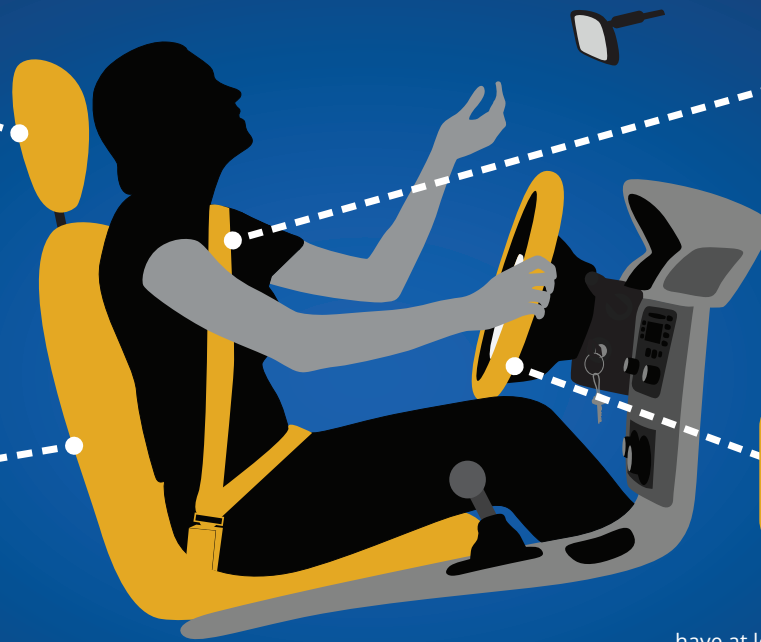
83%

have properly adjusted head restraints



88%

have a line of sight of 3 inches or greater (optimal seat height for visibility)



95%

are wearing a seatbelt at arrival



93%

have at least 10 inches between their chest and the steering wheel (minimum distance for safety)

*From survey of more than 7,000 Car-Fit participants

For more information, visit Car-Fit.org

Why CarFit?

Despite often being the safest drivers—more likely to wear their seatbelts, and less likely to speed or drink and drive—**older drivers are more likely to be killed or seriously injured in a crash** due to the greater fragility of their aging bodies.

Learn how you can help improve the safety of seniors in your community:

CarFit is an educational program created by AAA, AARP and the American Occupational Therapy Association.

Since *CarFit* launched nationally, more than 31,000 older drivers have gone through the program. While the primary goal is to teach drivers how to attain a safe and comfortable fit in their vehicles, the program also increases awareness that adaptations and modifications are available when medical conditions or changes make finding the best fit difficult.

How does it help?

CarFit benefits the whole community by helping the senior driver be a safer driver.

With one-on-one attention, *CarFit* technicians can quickly and gently identify an older driver's fit behind the wheel and explain necessary adjustments.

Survey results from *CarFit* participants show over one-third (37%) had at least one critical safety issue that needed to be addressed. The good news is that after a run through the *CarFit* 12-point program, 97% of participants' issues were resolved.

How can I become involved in CarFit?

CarFit is a program whose success depends on volunteers across the country. There are two ways one can become involved in *CarFit*:

- ◆ By becoming an **Event Coordinator**, you will be trained to host CarFit events following proper programmatic procedures. Event Coordinators train CarFit Technicians, secure dates and locations for *CarFit* events, participate in and monitor *CarFit* events and communicate with the national organizations, AAA, AARP and AOTA.

Event Coordinators must attend a two-day training conducted by a CarFit Instructor. To find an Event Coordinator Training in your area, [click here](#).

- ◆ By becoming a **CarFit Technician**, you will be able to participate in CarFit events hosted by a CarFit Event Coordinator. A half-day training teaches you the three parts of each CarFit event: Check-in, Check-up and Check-out. To find a Technician Training in your area, or to volunteer for an event, [click here](#).

A proper fit in one's car can greatly increase not only the driver's safety but also the safety of others.



CarFit Fact Sheet

CarFit is an educational program created by AAA, AARP, and the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA).

The goals of the community-based program are three-fold: Help older drivers improve the “fit” of their vehicles for safety and comfort; promote conversations among older adults and families about driving safety and the continued need for mobility options to keep people involved in their communities; and link adults with relevant, local resources that can help ensure they drive safely longer.

CarFit uses a trained team, including occupational therapy practitioners, to assist older drivers with items such as:



A clear line-of-sight over the steering wheel



Adequate space between the front air bag/steering wheel and the driver's breastbone; properly adjusted head restraints



Proper positioning on gas and brake pedals



Proper seat belt use and fit, and safe positioning of mirrors to minimize blind spots

According to CarFit participant data, the top four “fit” challenges for older drivers included improper distance from steering wheel (59 percent); adequate and safe views from side mirrors (32 percent); improper seat height (28 percent) and improper head restraint height (21 percent). The good news is that after a run through the CarFit twelve-point program, 97 percent of participants' issues were resolved.

Since CarFit launched nationally, more than 31,000 older drivers have gone through the program. The 20-minute check-up not only provides an opportunity to open a positive, non-threatening conversation about driver to vehicle fit, but it also provides specific community resources to help older drivers stay healthy and continue to drive for as long as safely possible.

How to Build a Media List

To “spread the word” about CarFit and build buzz in your local market, you’ll need to start by building what we call a media list.

1. Build your media list the same way you would build your professional network. Relationships are the best starting point when pitching your story. Think for a minute about *who* you know. Do you have any contacts on staff at your hometown newspaper or TV/radio stations? Do you know anyone else who might? If so, those contacts might help you get your foot in the door.
2. Begin by identifying the media outlets you think might be interested in your story and start to make a list. Think about the following types of media in your town that are within a radius of about 30 miles, depending on how large your town is. For smaller towns, you might want to opt for a larger radius.
 - ◆ **PRINT (magazines and newspapers)** What is the biggest newspaper in town? Does your community/neighborhood have a smaller newspaper as well? How about a city or regional magazine that focuses on what people are doing in your community? At smaller newspapers, ask for the name, phone number and email address of the managing editor or special sections editor.
 - ◆ **TV** What are the major TV stations in town? Do they have morning or mid-day shows that feature interesting things happening in your community? Do you know whether any of your favorite TV news anchors specialize in public health, philanthropy or traffic safety and may be interested in this story?
 - ◆ **RADIO** Your participation in CarFit can make for a great interview opportunity for local radio morning shows. Think about the most popular radio hosts in your town. Be sure to know the radio show and understand your host before making any commitments, and avoid controversial stations that may alienate a particular segment of the audience.
3. Once you’ve identified which media outlets you think would be the best fit for your story, check each outlet’s website for contact information. Many stations will list contact information for a newsroom, editor or reporter. Search for email addresses and phone numbers to support your list.
4. Identify the right contacts at each media outlet. Your contact persons will have different titles based on media type:
 - ◆ **PRINT (magazines and newspapers)** Regional magazine editors, newspaper health or philanthropy section editors. At smaller newspapers, ask for the name, phone number and email address of the managing editor or special sections editor.
 - ◆ **TV** News assignment editor, as well as the producers of the station’s morning, midday, and/or talk shows.
 - ◆ **Radio** News director, producer of the station’s morning and/or talk shows. Be cautious about approaching “shock jock” stations that may not handle your news in a tasteful manner. Usually, news or talk stations are more receptive to pitches because they have more room for stories that are not timely or breaking news.
 - ◆ **Online** Depending on what type of online source you are reaching out to, your contact could vary. If it’s a site run by one individual, then you only have one option, but if you are targeting an online news site, you should look for someone who covers community news or health topics.

Media Relations 101

We encourage you to proactively jump on any local media opportunity in your area, but keep in mind that *all national media is to be directed to your AAA, AARP or AOTA Program Administrator.*

Examples of local media: *The Winter Park Observer*, mid-day news at a local news station, local daytime radio show.

Examples of national media: NPR national radio interview, CBS Evening News, CNN, Good Morning America.

A Step-by-Step Checklist

- 1. Fill in the blanks and customize the press release.** We've provided you with a great "shell" of a release that includes all of the details about CarFit. Now all you need to do is fill in the release with any localized information (community facts, what you're doing for an event, your contact information, etc.) and you're ready to go! Remember... the more local the story, the more appealing it will be to the media.
- 2. Take your customized press release, add the enclosed fact sheet and get ready to distribute.** Send these two documents to the media contacts you just added to your media list. Sending emails is probably the best (and easiest) way to get all of your information sent out in a timely and cost-effective manner. ***Do not send the press release as an attachment in your email. Copy and paste the press release into the body of the email and include the fact sheet as an attachment.*** Consider a clever subject line to make sure it doesn't get lost in the mix (e.g., *CarFit Performs Lifesaving Safety Checks for Seniors*). Be brief, get to the point and emphasize the local story angle.
- 3. Following Up.** After you've distributed your media materials, it's time to make follow-up calls to pitch your story idea to your media contacts. If you email the information, you can begin to place your follow up calls the very next day and subsequent weeks thereafter.
- 4. What's in it for them?** Always think about what the media really want (benefits to their audience) when showcasing CarFit. Overall, the media love local stories—what's happening to people in their community, how it fits into an overall national trend, what impact it has on other people in town, etc. That's where your story will resonate the most.
- 5. Be Prepared.** If the media responds, be sure you are ready. Read and review your message points.

Interview Preparation

Like all things in life, the key to great success is preparation—and preparing for an interview is no different. If a reporter or editor from the local media is interested in a story about CarFit, he or she may want to do an interview with you in person or over the phone to talk about the program. Interviews are a perfect opportunity to share your messages with the public and call them to action (come to event, visit the CarFit website), so make sure you are prepared. Remember, you are helping spread the word about a national initiative to keep older drivers safe!

Before the interview

- 1.** Get as much information as possible on the type of interview. Most reporters will share what they hope the article will discuss and what they hope you will bring to the story.
- 2.** Know your key messages. The better acquainted you are with the messages you want to deliver, the more easily your story will flow. Don't memorize a script, but try to make the words your own. Practice answering questions at home in front of a mirror. The more you verbalize your key messages, the more comfortable you will be with them when it's time to answer questions.
- 3.** Prepare for possible interviews by rehearsing with a friend or co-worker. Practice helps you become comfortable using the message points in response to questions.

During the interview

1. Pace yourself. If the interview is for a television or radio station, ask whether the interview will be live or taped. Live interviews normally last only two or three minutes, and when you are live, there is no opportunity for editing. A taped interview might last 5 or 10 minutes, because the reporter will have time to edit the story before it airs.
2. Think of the interview as a conversation with a potential new friend, but be aware that the reporter is looking for an interesting story. Don't share anything you don't want to see in print or on television. The reporter knows you are a volunteer and promoting a charitable cause, and they might want to help spread the word themselves.
3. Relax and be yourself. Talk slowly and deliberately. If you do not know an answer, say so. Then suggest the reporter contact your Program Administrator after the interview for follow-up questions.
4. Ask the reporter whether there are facts or other information the reporter will need to complete the story and find out when the story will run.

Additional tips for television interviews

1. Know what you want to communicate and don't be afraid to repeat yourself. Live by your key message points.
2. Short answers are better than long ones. Stop talking when you're done making your point.
3. This is not a confrontational interview, so don't forget to smile while you are talking! Smiling while talking makes the voice sound enthusiastic and engaged.
4. Don't overlap the interviewer's question and never interrupt. Only begin your answer when he or she is finished.
5. Speak in complete sentences and don't use slang. Avoid jargon and acronyms. Speak as simply as possible.
6. Body language is important for television. Practice by talking in front of a mirror. Here's a tip to remember: People will remember how they felt about you more than they'll remember exactly what you said. Were you warm, friendly and genuine? Did you seem confident and comfortable? Keep your hands free, open and animated. Gesture as you normally would, and don't forget to smile!
7. Always assume the camera is rolling and remember there is no such thing as "off the record." Anything you say can be used in the interview.
8. Television media need good visuals—another great reason for your event to have signage!
9. Don't forget to get approval from participants to be on camera. Make sure all model release forms are signed and documented properly.
10. Mention the CarFit website (Car-Fit.org) at the end of the interview so people know where they can go for more information.

Capturing Media Clips

It's important to monitor the news media (television stations, newspapers) for all coverage on the CarFit program. This also helps us monitor program consistency. If you secure an interview or media placement, we would appreciate a copy of the result. Send it to info@car-fit.org. This will help us track the success of our work!

After your interview, ask the reporter whether he or she knows when the story will air or be printed.

1. Monitor the outlet’s website. You can usually search for a specific term within the site to find related articles, or simply do a Google search. Sometimes the story will be published in print or on the air, but not be posted online. For this reason, it’s important to follow up with the reporter to gather as much information as possible about when the story will air or be printed.
2. After you have completed an interview or secured a media placement, please send the following information to info@car-fit.org.
 - ◆ Date
 - ◆ Publication
 - ◆ Reporter
 - ◆ City
 - ◆ Your name
 - ◆ Your local agency

Using Social Media to Promote Your Event



Facebook

Seniors, do you have trouble seeing over the steering wheel? Reaching the gas and brake pedals? Checking blind spots? CarFit was developed by AAA, AARP and the American Occupational Therapy Association and is a quick, yet comprehensive, 12-point check of how well you and your car work together. Learn why the proper fit in your vehicle is essential for both your safety and the safety of others on the road. www.car-fit.org

With age comes changes in strength, flexibility and range of motion. These changes might make it more difficult to drive comfortably. Did you know a quick 12-point checkup can help boost safety and comfort? Find a CarFit event near you and learn why a proper fit in your vehicle can make a world of difference for the road ahead. www.car-fit.org



Twitter

- ◆ Vehicle “fit” matters! Seniors: find a CarFit event near you <http://bit.ly/12iurCb>
- ◆ VIDEO: Does your vehicle “fit” you? Car Fit’s step-by-step “checklist” helps improve senior driver comfort and safety. <http://bit.ly/165oOfR>
- ◆ Do you “fit” in your car? A 20 minute checkup can help senior’s improve safety & comfort behind the wheel <http://bit.ly/165oOfR>
- ◆ Minor adjustments to your vehicle can improve a seniors safety and comfort behind the wheel <http://bit.ly/165oOfR>
- ◆ As you age, changes in vision, flexibility and strength can make you less comfortable behind the wheel CarFit can help! <http://bit.ly/165oOfR>
- ◆ Seniors - having a hard time seeing over the steering wheel or reaching the pedals? Try CarFit <http://bit.ly/165oOfR>
- ◆ At a CarFit event, trained techs work with seniors to ensure they fit in their vehicle with max.comfort & safety. <http://bit.ly/165oOfR>
- ◆ Worry that your aging parent can’t see over the steering wheel? Find a CarFit event near you. <http://bit.ly/165oOfR>

Copy Style and Logo Usage Guide

Whenever we promote or talk about the CarFit program, it is imperative to follow the copy style and logo guidelines. Doing so ensures program consistency. Do not create new language or images; only use what is specified below.

Boilerplate Mandatory language, to be used whenever speaking of the CarFit program:

CarFit is a national program developed by AAA, AARP and the American Occupational Therapy Association and is designed to give a quick, yet comprehensive check on how well an older driver and their vehicle work together.

Logo To be used in any promotional efforts—the logo must be present at all times.

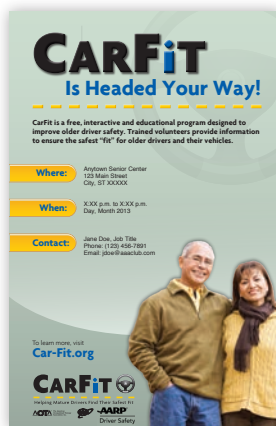
English



Spanish



Poster/Banners The following artwork has been designed for you to customize for local use. Should you decide to create your own posters/and or promotional materials, the artwork **must** be approved by your program administrator or Instructor.



Customized/local logos may be added upon approval from program administrator or Instructor.

Website Tools and Videos

Visit www.Car-Fit.org for additional tools, such as a series of CarFit promotional videos, and a new CarFit program brochure in English and Spanish.