WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A child seat system comprising:

a child seat;

a support base, the child seat being positionable on the support base; and

a side impact protection (SIP) device associated with one of the support base and the child seat, the SIP device being transformable between an extended configuration, an intermediate configuration, and a stowed configuration.

2. The child seat system of claim 1, wherein the SIP device protrudes outwardly beyond the support base and the child seat in both the extended configuration and the intermediate configuration.

3. The child seat system of claim 1, wherein the SIP device is operable as a step in at least one of the extended configuration and the intermediate configuration.

4. The child seat system of claim 1, wherein the SIP device includes a step/SIP bar and in the extended configuration, the step/SIP bar is positionable directly adjacent to the vehicle door.

5. The child seat system of claim 1, wherein when in the extended configuration, the SIP device is arranged at a first angle relative to the support base, and when in the intermediate configuration, the SIP device is arranged at a second angle relative to the support base, the first angle being greater than the second angle.

6. The child seat system of claim 1, wherein the SIP device has a horizontal orientation when in the extended configuration.

7. The child seat system of claim 1, wherein the SIP device includes a step/SIP bar coupled to the support base, the step/SIP bar being rotatable about an axis between the extended configuration and the stowed configuration.

8. The child seat system of claim 7, wherein the SIP device includes a secondary bar movably coupled to the support base and to the step/SIP bar.

9. The child seat system of claim 1, wherein the SIP device is translatable relative to the support base, the SIP device being in a first translational position when in the extended configuration, and the SIP device being in a second translational position when in at least one of the intermediate configuration and the stowed configuration.

10. The child seat system of claim 9, wherein the SIP device is at a same translational position in both the stowed configuration and the intermediate configuration.

11. The child seat system of claim 9, wherein the first translational position is vertically above the second translational position.

12. The child seat system of claim 1, wherein the SIP device is movable along a path of movement between the stowed configuration and the extended configuration, the intermediate configuration being arranged at an intermediate position along the path of movement.

13. The child seat system of claim 1, wherein in the stowed configuration, the SIP device is flush with the support base.

14. The child seat system of claim 1, further comprising a locking mechanism operably coupled to the SIP device to lock the SIP device in one of the extended configuration, the stowed configuration, and the intermediate configuration.

15. The child seat system of claim 14, wherein the locking mechanism includes a first housing, a second housing, and a locking gear mounted between the first housing and the second housing, the locking gear being movable out of engagement with the second housing to rotationally decouple the second housing from the first housing.

16. The child seat system of claim 15, further comprising a biasing mechanism operably coupled to the locking gear, wherein a biasing force of the biasing mechanism is operable to bias the locking gear into engagement with the second housing.

17. The child seat system of claim 16, further comprising an actuator arranged at the second housing and operably coupled to the locking gear to oppose the biasing force of the biasing mechanism.