

Purpose

This program provides information for teens who work outside their homes and for parents and employers who are concerned about the safety of working teens.

Background

Teens and parents will be able to identify high-risk work environments. Teens will better understand their rights in the workplace and feel comfortable requesting safety-related information during a job interview. Parents will understand the challenges their teens face and will be prepared to provide support, direction, and guidance. This will assist teens in making decisions and assuming responsibilities.

An estimated 80% of all teens work for pay at some time during their high school years. Highest employment is during the summer months.

Approximately 100,000 teens aged 15 to 17 visit emergency departments each year for work related injuries. The National Consumer League cautions teens to choose their employment wisely. They should steer clear of dangerous work that is prohibited for minors under 18 years of age and they should always be vigilant about safety in the workplace.

Many managers may not thoroughly understand child labor laws and the requirements for reporting injuries. Statistics indicate little attention is directed to these areas, and inspections are minimal leaving little incentive for managers to become more informed of or compliant with the laws. Statistics provided by the Secretary of Labor indicate that more than 50% of teen injuries occur while working in the retail sector. Parents of teens and school administrators should become more pro-active in this area to ensure teens are aware of the dangers involved with working in the retail sector.

The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) governs teens and the hours and environments in which they may work. This act is enforced by the Wage and Hour Division of the Employment Standards Administration and within the Department of Labor. This law protects the educational opportunities of minors and prohibits their employment in jobs with unsafe conditions. Many deaths have been associated with jobs such as driving a motor vehicle and forklift operation and based on these statistics the FLSA prohibits 16- and 17-year-olds from performing these jobs. Other hazardous activities, such as working alone in retail

business and cooking, are typically permitted. A copy of these laws must be posted in the work establishment. If this is not the case, a copy can be found at local libraries.

Procedures

According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) Publication 95-125, jobs that cause the most adolescent deaths or severe injury are:

- Working around motor vehicles
- Operating tractors and heavy equipment
- Working near electrical hazards
- Working at jobs with high risk for homicide
- Working with fall hazards
- Cooking and working around cooking appliances
- Hazardous manual lifting

Teens are permitted to work (in select establishments) beginning at age 14. Exceptions to the minimum age are newspaper delivery and farm work. For most jobs, such as cashiering, retail sales, daycare, and park work, a teen must be at least 16 years old. Other jobs, such as driving commercial vehicles, working in manufacturing environments, meat packing, logging, and sawmills, are reserved for workers at least 18 years old.

The work schedule of 14- or 15-year-olds cannot exceed 48 hours per week or 8 hours per day. Before their sixteenth birthday, students are not allowed to work past midnight, or before 5:00 am. They also cannot work past 10:00 pm on a night before school.

NIOSH identified working alone as a major risk factor associated with violence in the workplace. Also, working late night or early morning hours constitutes a hazard. Statistics indicate that fewer customers and the potential for more cash on hand make retail environments prime targets during these hours.

High crime areas obviously pose a threat. In identified high-crime areas, adopt additional security measures and conduct employee training to ensure workers' safety.

To ensure a safe workplace, contact the local police to determine if the business is in a high-crime area or if crimes have been committed in the past. Talk to others who work for the business to determine the potential for problems for violence or gang related activity.

At the job interview ask questions related to job security and the safety measures taken to protect employees.

Talk to the supervisor to ensure he or she is aware of teen concerns and that satisfactory action to address safety issues will be taken.

Questions to ask about workplace safety and security are:

- Does the business visibly post statements about the amount of cash on hand?
- Is lighting adequate both inside and outside, at entrances and exits, and in the parking lot and garbage disposal areas?
- Is there a working alarm system?
- Are video cameras or mirrors used to deter crime?
- Is a buddy system in place with a neighboring business in the event of an unforeseen action?
- Is a system set up with local security and police patrols?
- Is more than one person on premises to open and close?
- Are employees trained in the event that someone suspicious approaches them or attempts robbery?
- Has a security survey of the business been conducted?

When accepting jobs in areas with a high risk of violence, ask questions during the interview to determine employee safety. Reluctance to ask questions, for fear of not being hired, can place an individual at great risk. Businesses that do not answer these questions or provide protection are at higher risk for violence. Prior to accepting the job, teens should discuss their concerns with the supervisor on site, parents, and teachers to determine whether it is a safe environment.

Having a job can be a positive experience for teens and can teach values, discipline and money management. However, teens working more than 20 hours per week have been known to see their grades decline.

The Occupational Safety and Health Act entitles everyone to a workplace free of recognized hazards. The employer must abide by this regulation and ensure compliance with the guidelines of this law. Employee training in safety and security, **prior to beginning the job**, is the key factor required under this law.

Economic demands have resulted in the influx of convenience and fast food business. As a result, teens are working longer hours beginning as early as

5:00 am, and often closing late. This schedule meets the needs of employers rather than the teenage worker resulting in a negative impact affecting health, safety, schoolwork, family life, and community involvement.

Teenagers may experience stress as they attempt to balance school and work. They may also become sleepy or inattentive due to long, early, or late working hours, and employers expect alertness as well as a positive attitude at work. Teens may even consider dropping classes or quitting school entirely. These challenges can overwhelm a teenager, so support and guidance, whether from educators or parents, must be provided to assist teens in working through these challenges.

Adults can support teens by working together to improve the quality of their work experience, the relationship between their work and academic training, and their future prospects.

Education, business, and workers, present and future, would all benefit from closer ties between schools and employers committed to developing the talents and skills of American youth.

Review Questions

1. Due to the expansion of fast food enterprises, teens are being asked to work longer hours.
True / False
2. You must be at least 16 years old to perform which jobs (select all that apply)?
 - a. Retail sales
 - b. Manufacturing
 - c. Cashiering
 - d. Logging
3. Which risk factors are related to violence in the workplace?
 - a. Working alone
 - b. Working late-night or early-morning hours
 - c. Working in high-crime areas
 - d. All of the above
 - e. None of the above
4. Asking questions before being hired in a high-risk area will promote worker safety.
True / False
5. Adults (parents and teachers) can support teens by (select all that apply):
 - a. Working together to improve the quality of their work experience
 - b. Expecting a positive attitude and pride in their work
 - c. Improving the quality of their relationship between work and academic training
 - d. Improving their future prospects

Answers

1. True
2. A and C
3. D
4. True
5. A, C, and D

For more information on workplace safety topics and supervisor responsibilities see the Service Lloyds website. In Risk Control's Training Materials section, we have additional resources including:

- Aging in the Workplace
- Inexperienced Workers
- Safety Supervisor Training – Toolbox Talk
- On the Job Safety – Toolbox Talk

Remember to practice Safety; don't learn it by accident.