



Teens at Work: Injury Surveillance and Prevention Project Occupational Health Surveillance Program Massachusetts Department of Public Health

Background

Work is part of everyday life for many teens throughout the country. An estimated 80% of U.S. teens are employed at some point during high school¹. Right here in Massachusetts, nearly a quarter of 15- to 17-year-olds were employed at any given point in time from 2005 through 2010². Massachusetts teens most commonly work in part-time, short-term jobs, largely in retail and service industries such as restaurants, grocery stores, and hospitals².

While work can provide many benefits to youth, it can also pose health and safety risks. In 2009, nationwide, an estimated 26,600 15- to 17-year-olds were treated in emergency departments for their work-related injuries or illnesses³—thousands more teens than could fit in even the largest NHL hockey arena.

Knowing where and how teens are injured is essential to developing effective approaches to prevention. That is why the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH), with funding from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, created *The Teens at Work: Injury Surveillance and Prevention Project*.

About The *Teens at Work Project*

The MDPH *Teens at Work: Injury Surveillance and Prevention Project* (TAW) collects data about work-related injuries to teens under age 18 and uses the data to help plan prevention activities throughout the state.

The information is obtained through health care provider and hospital reporting to MDPH, a practice that has been mandated by public health code since 1992, and through workers' compensation (WC) lost wage claims. Injuries identified through WC claims are limited to injuries resulting in five or more lost workdays, and only 9 out of 77 hospital emergency departments (ED) consistently report injuries to the surveillance system. Consequently, the actual number of work-related injuries to Massachusetts teens is believed to be much higher than the number identified by TAW.

TAW also conducts follow-up interviews with injured teens to learn more about their injuries and work experiences. In some cases, TAW staff conduct research-oriented worksite investigations to gain a better understanding of the work environment and circumstances under which particular injuries occurred. If appropriate, TAW refers cases to other government agencies for follow-up.

The data collected by TAW provide important information about the types of injuries that teen workers experience and the industries and occupations in which they are employed, while the project's outreach activities help to promote efforts to prevent injuries to other working teens in the future.

Overview

From January 2005 through December 2010, 1,666 work-related injuries to Massachusetts teens were reported to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health.

Over half of the injuries (57%) were identified through workers' compensation (WC) lost wage claims; the other 43% were identified through reports from a small sample of hospital emergency departments (ED).

This fact sheet provides a snapshot of these non-fatal work-related injuries to Massachusetts teens.

Injuries Snapshot⁴

More Massachusetts teens (30%) work in restaurants, including fast food, than in any other single industry. Grocery stores and other retail combined account for another 31% of the teen workforce, while health care and construction each make up a small proportion (Figure 1).

These five industries accounted for nearly 75% of all injuries to young workers.

Restaurants was the most common industry in which youth were injured (Figure 2), similar to its workforce makeup. On the contrary, teens working in health care, including hospitals and nursing homes, accounted for 12% of all injuries (Figure 2) despite making up just 4% of the teen workforce (Figure 1).

61% of injured teens interviewed thought their work-related injuries were preventable.

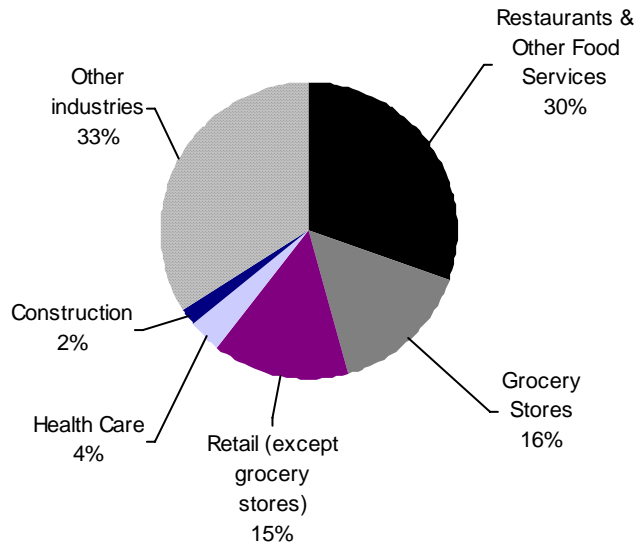
Source: Teens at Work: Injury Surveillance System, 2000-2010, MDPH.

Detailed fact sheets are available for each of the industries highlighted above:

- Food Service
- Grocery Stores
- Health Care Service
- Retail Trade (except grocery stores)
- Construction

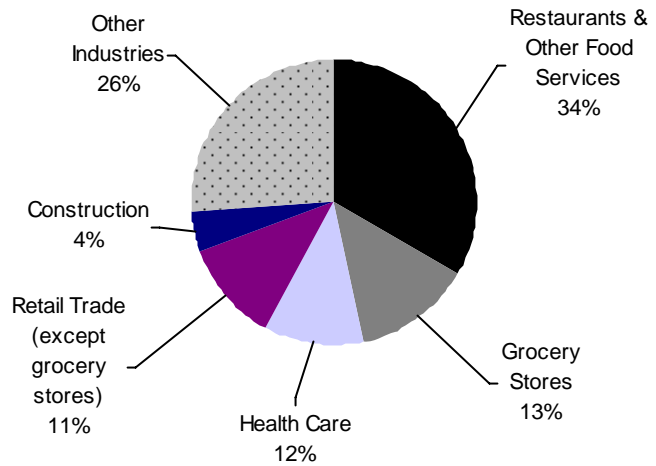
Go to www.mass.gov/dph/teensatwork then click on “Data Reports and Publications.”

Figure 1. Distribution of employed 15- to 17-year-olds by industry, Massachusetts, 2005-2010 (n=406,875)



Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey, 2005-2010.

Figure 2. Distribution of work-related injuries to teens under age 18 by industry, Massachusetts, 2005-2010 (n=1,666)



Note: Industry was missing for 156 cases; these were not included in the calculations.

Source: Teens at Work: Injury Surveillance System, MDPH.

If you have questions about the information presented here, contact Project Coordinator Beatriz Pazos Vautin: 617-624-5632 or Beatriz.Pazos@state.ma.us.

References

- ¹ National Institute of Medicine. Protecting youth at work: Health, safety and development of working children and adolescents in the United States. Washington, DC: National Research Council, National Academy Press. 1998.
- ² US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey. Washington, DC: US Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010.
- ³ US Consumer Product Safety Commission. National Electronic Injury Surveillance System—NIOSH Work Supplement (NEISS-WORK). <http://www2a.cdc.gov/risqs/default.htm>.
- ⁴ Teens at Work: Injury Surveillance System. Massachusetts Department of Public Health.

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