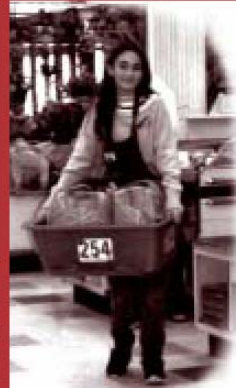
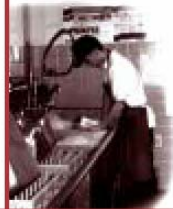


Protecting WORKING TEENS



A Guide for HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS

2003

Work-Related Injuries to Teens

Millions of adolescents in the United States work. While work can provide many important benefits, it can also have negative consequences. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health reports that each year an estimated 200,000 adolescents under 18 sustain work-related injuries and at least 70 die on the job. Approximately 77,000 are hurt seriously enough to require treatment in hospital emergency departments. In a Massachusetts study, work-related injuries accounted for as much as 20% of all injuries to 16 and 17 year olds seen in hospital emergency rooms. This exceeded numbers due to sports and motor vehicle injuries in this age group.¹

In addition to facing safety risks at work that can cause injuries, teens can also be exposed to health hazards on the job that may result in acute or chronic illness. Examples include exposures to lead, pesticides, asthma-causing agents, and noise.

A 17 year old dietary aide in a hospital was blinded for two weeks after the chemical she was using to wash pans splashed into her eyes.²

Studies have shown that working up to 10 hours per week can have a positive effect on teens and their school work. Working more than 20 hours per week has been associated with increased drug and alcohol use, fatigue and stress.

¹ Statistics based on injuries for which location of injury occurrence was known.

² Cases from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health surveillance system for work-related injuries to teens.

Location and Types of Injuries

Massachusetts working youth are injured most frequently in restaurants, grocery stores, other retail stores, and health care facilities. Typical injuries among working youth are lacerations, contusions and abrasions, sprains and strains, burns, and fractures or dislocations. Some injuries, such as back injuries, can have long-term health effects.

A 17 year old restaurant worker fractured her leg after falling off a dough mixer she was standing on to reach pans. Her previous requests for a ladder had gone unanswered.²

Examples of Causes of Injury

- handling hot liquids and grease
- using cutting tools
- lifting heavy objects, including patients
- slipping on wet or greasy floors
- operating motor vehicles (illegal for those under 18)
- working late at night and/or alone

Role of Health Care Providers

Health care providers have an excellent opportunity to counsel teen patients during the high risk transition period from childhood to adulthood. You can play an important role by providing them with information, promoting safe work practices, and encouraging them to know their rights and to speak up when there is a problem.

Talking to Teen Patients About Work

- Ask your teen patients whether they work and if so, where.
- Ask if they or their friends have ever been injured at work.
- Ask how many hours they work in a week, especially during the school year.
- Discuss whether the number of hours interferes with other activities and contributes to fatigue.
- Ask about work tasks – both regular and occasional. Are the tasks appropriate to your patients' developmental and physical abilities?
- Ask your patients whether they have been trained about possible hazards at work and how to protect themselves.
- Encourage your patients to follow safety rules at work, including using protective clothing and equipment (when required).
- Encourage your patients to tell someone (parent, boss, older co-worker) if they encounter a problem at work.
- Provide materials to teens and their parents or guardians about child labor laws and resources for more information. (See resource list.)
- Report serious work-related injuries to teens (under 18) to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) (required by 105 CMR 300): (617) 624-5632.

A 15 year old gas station attendant received 2nd and 3rd degree frostbite on his fingers and toes after a 7-hour shift pumping gas during freezing weather;²

Legal Work Hours for Teens

14 and 15 Year Olds

Work Hours

Not before 7 a.m. or after 7 p.m. during school year
Not during school hours
Between 7 a.m.-9 p.m. in summer

Maximum Hours When School Is in Session

18 hours a week
3 hours/day on school days
8 hours/day Saturday, Sunday, and holidays
6 days a week

Maximum Hours When School Is Not in Session

40 hours a week
8 hours a day
6 days a week

16 and 17 Year Olds

Work Hours

Not before 6 a.m. or after 10 p.m. (except in restaurants - 12:00 a.m. Fridays, Saturdays, and during school vacation)

Maximum Hours When School Is in Session

48 hours a week
9 hours a day
6 days a week

Maximum Hours When School Is Not in Session

48 hours a week
9 hours a day
6 days a week

Examples of Prohibited Tasks for Massachusetts Teens less than 18

Using a meat slicer
Driving for work
Working at heights of 30 feet or above
Operating a box crusher

Agencies and Organizations

Questions about wages or child labor laws:

Massachusetts Office of the Attorney General,
Fair Labor and Business Practices Division
(617) 727-3465
www.ago.state.ma.us

U.S. Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division
(617) 565-2066
www.dol.gov/esa/whd

Questions about workplace health & safety:

Occupational Safety and Health Administration
(OSHA) www.osha.gov

Methuen Office - (617) 565-8110

Braintree Office - (617) 565-6924

Springfield Office - (413) 785-0123

Teens at Work Injury Prevention Project,
Massachusetts Department of Public Health
(617) 624-5632

www.state.ma.us/dph/bhsre/ohsp/ohsp.html

email: teens.atwork@state.ma.us

Division of Occupational Safety,
Massachusetts Department of Labor and Workforce
Development (617) 969-7177

www.state.ma.us/dos/

Questions about discrimination at work:

Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination
(617) 727-3990

www.state.ma.us/mcad

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)
(617) 565-3200

www.eeoc.gov

Questions about workers' compensation:

Massachusetts Department of Industrial Accidents
(800) 323-3249 x 470.

www.state.ma.us/dia

This pamphlet was prepared by the MDPH's Teens at Work Injury Prevention Project and the Education Development Center, Inc. with funding from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. For more information or materials for teens and parents, call (617) 624-5632 or (617) 618-2238.

