

Protecting Your Working Teen

A Guide for Parents

Work is a valuable experience for many teenagers. It can provide needed money, skills, and self-confidence. At the same time, working teens also face risks, even in places that seem safe. Teens are more likely than adults to get hurt at work. An estimated 179,000 U.S. teens are injured at work every year, and many are killed. In Massachusetts, hundreds of teens visit hospital emergency rooms each year for work-related injuries.

Injuries at work should not be considered “part of the job.” Most injuries can and should be prevented. Employers, young workers, and parents all have roles to play in ensuring positive, safe work experiences.

Steps you can take to help your teen stay safe at work:

1. Know the child labor laws and make sure your teen knows them (see reverse).

2. Talk with your teen about his or her job.

Ask your teen about:

- ◆ Tasks - what your teen is asked to do.
- ◆ Training - whether your teen has been trained to do assigned tasks safely.
- ◆ The workplace itself - if there are hazards like slippery floors or machines without safety guards.
- ◆ The supervisor - where the supervisor is while your teen is working, how receptive he or she is to listening to employees’ concerns.
- ◆ Safety equipment - if your teen is provided with goggles, gloves, special shoes, or other safety equipment.

3. Set limits on hours.

Studies have shown that teens who work more than 20 hours a week do not do as well in school as those who work fewer hours.

Teachers report that teens who work late at night are less alert in class and less prepared.

4. Help your teen talk about his or her concerns.

Encourage your teen to answer the following questions:

What do you want your supervisor to do or change?

Examples:

“I only want to work 3 hours on school days.”

“I want help lifting heavy boxes.”

Why do you want your supervisor to make this change?

Examples:

“So I can keep up with my schoolwork.”

“So I won’t get hurt.”

Whose help do you want?

Examples:

“I’d feel more comfortable approaching the boss with some of my coworkers.”

“I’d like my parents to come with me when I meet with the boss.”

How will you talk to your supervisor about this?

Examples:

“Can I make an appointment to talk with you about a problem I’m having?”

“Lifting boxes is hurting my back, and I’d like to work out another way to get the job done.”

Contact any of the agencies listed below if you need additional help:

MA Office of the Attorney General, Fair Labor Division (enforces state child labor laws).....(617) 727-3465
US Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division (enforces federal child labor laws).....(617) 624-6700
MA Department of Labor Standards (oversees the work permit process).....(617) 626-6952
MA Department of Industrial Accidents (oversees the workers’ compensation system).....(800) 323-3249

For more information, contact the Massachusetts Department of Public Health *Teens at Work Project*
(617) 624-5632 | teens.atwork@state.ma.us | www.mass.gov/dph/teensatwork



The Child Labor Laws in Massachusetts

Child labor laws exist to protect teenagers in the workplace. They limit the number of hours teens are legally able to work. The legal work hours for minors are:

14 & 15 Year-Olds

- ◆ Only between 7 am and 7 pm (9 pm during summer)
- ◆ Not during school hours
- ◆ Maximum of 18 hours per week (40 during school vacation), 3 hours a day (8 hours on weekends and during school vacation), and 6 days per week

Persons UNDER 14 may NOT WORK!

There are a few exceptions to this, such as babysitting, working as news carriers, on farms, and in entertainment (with a special permit).

16 & 17 Year-Olds

- ◆ Only between 6 am and 10 pm on nights preceding a regularly scheduled school day
- ◆ If the establishment stops serving customers at 10 pm, the minor may be employed until 10:15 pm
- ◆ Only between 6 am and 11:30 pm on nights *not* preceding a regularly scheduled school day, except in restaurants and race tracks until midnight
- ◆ Maximum of 48 hours per week, 9 hours per day, and 6 days per week

After 8 pm, all minors must be directly supervised by an adult who is located in the workplace and who is reasonably accessible. (With the exception of minors who work at kiosks in the common areas of some malls.)

Child labor laws also protect teens' health and safety by prohibiting them from working in hazardous jobs or doing dangerous tasks. The following is a list of *some* of these tasks:

A complete summary of prohibited tasks is available online: www.mass.gov/dols/youth

Persons under 16 years-old may NOT:

- Cook (except on electric or gas grills that do not have open flames)
- Operate fryolators, rotisseries, NEICO broilers, or pressure cookers
- Operate, clean, or repair power-driven food slicers, grinders, choppers, processors, cutters, or mixers
- Perform any baking activities
- Operate microwave ovens (except to heat food in microwave ovens with a maximum capacity of 140 degrees Fahrenheit)
- Clean kitchen surfaces that are hotter than 100 degrees Fahrenheit
- Filter, transport, or dispose of cooking oil or grease hotter than 100 degrees Fahrenheit
- Work in freezers or meat coolers
- Operate, clean or repair power-driven machinery (except office machines or machines for retail, cleanup or kitchen work not otherwise prohibited)
- Work in a manufacturing facility (e.g. a factory)
- Work on or use ladders, scaffolds, or their substitutes
- Work in amusement places (e.g., pool or billiard room, or bowling alley)
- Work in door-to-door street sales, including work as a sign waiver (except directly outside of employer establishment)
- Ride in or on a motor vehicle (except in passenger seat if wearing a seatbelt)
- Work with dangerous electrical machinery or appliances
- **Work in any of the occupations or tasks prohibited for persons under age 18**

Persons under 18 years-old may NOT:

- Drive a vehicle, forklift, or work assist vehicle (except golf carts in certain circumstances)
- Ride as a passenger on a forklift
- Operate, clean, or repair power-driven meat slicers, grinders or choppers
- Operate, clean, or repair power-driven bakery machines (except for certain countertop models and pizza dough rollers)
- Work 30 feet or more above ground or water
- Handle, serve, or sell alcoholic beverages
- Use circular, chain or band saws; guillotine shears; wood chippers; and abrasive cutting discs
- Use power-driven woodworking machines
- Use, service, drive, or work from hoisting machines
- Operate or load power-driven balers, compactors, or paper processing machines
- Work slaughtering, packing, or processing meat and poultry
- Work in roofing or on or about a roof
- Work where they are exposed to radioactive substances
- Oil or clean hazardous machinery in motion
- Work in any job requiring the possession or use of a firearm

Persons UNDER 18 must have WORK PERMITS

All teens under 18 must get a work permit from the school district where they live or go to school. For more information, visit the website of the Department of Labor Standards: www.mass.gov/dols/youth

Workers' Compensation

If your child is injured at work, they may be eligible for workers' compensation benefits. Contact the Massachusetts Department of Industrial Accidents at 800-323-3249 or www.mass.gov/dia for more information.