

Protecting Your Working Teen

A Guide for Parents: Students in Co-op Placements

Co-op placements (jobs that are part of vocational technical students' curriculum) can be valuable experiences for teenagers; they are designed to build lifetime skills and self-confidence. At the same time, working co-op students also face risks, even in jobs that seem safe. Teens are more likely than adults to get hurt at work.

Every year, more than 160,000 U.S. teens are injured at work, and many are killed. Injuries at work should not be considered "part of the job." Most injuries can and should be prevented. Employers, young workers, schools and parents all have roles to play in ensuring that co-op work placements are positive, safe experiences. The information in this guide can help you play a part in keeping your teen safer at work.

Questions to consider *prior* to your teen's co-op...

Of the school:

- What tasks is my teen expected to perform at the worksite?
- Will my teen be performing any tasks generally prohibited for teens in non co-op jobs? If so, what are they?
- Will my teen be trained on how to perform all assigned tasks?
- Will my teen be trained in emergency procedures?
- Is it my responsibility to obtain or purchase any personal safety or protective equipment that is needed for my child's job? (e.g. eye protection, gloves, shoes)
- What are the conditions most likely to cause an injury or illness while my teen works, and what steps will be taken to prevent them?
- What is the process for monitoring my teen's co-op experience? (e.g. face-to-face check ins, student journal entries)
- If my teen is injured at the worksite, who will notify me (school, employer, both)?
- Who should I contact if I have questions or concerns?

Of your teen:

- Do you understand what your responsibilities will be?
- Do you have any questions about the safety and health or training requirements for your co-op?

Checking in with your teen *during* the co-op...

Remember to keep talking after your teen starts working:

- Are you enjoying your co-op?
- What does your workplace look like, and where do you work there?
- Did you learn anything new today?
- What are some of the challenging (and/or exciting) parts of your job?
- Do you feel comfortable doing everything you're assigned to?
- Did you receive training on how to do your tasks? (can also be phrased for tasks brought up in a specific conversation)
- How do you like your supervisor?
- Do you get regular feedback from your supervisor, so you know how you're doing?
- Is your supervisor always nearby?
- Do you feel comfortable reporting any concerns to your supervisor?
- Do you feel comfortable asking your supervisor for help, if you have a question about performing a task or need a refresher on how to do it?

The Child Labor Laws in Massachusetts

Child labor laws exist to protect teenagers in the workplace. They limit the hours teens are legally able to work, and protect teens' health and safety by prohibiting work in hazardous jobs or dangerous tasks. Below is a summary of the child labor laws most relevant to Massachusetts co-op students, including hour restrictions, work permit information, and *some* of the hazardous tasks prohibited for minors.

All co-op students must be at least 16 years old, so laws related to teens under 16 are not included below.

The legal work hours for 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 reasonably accessible.

Work Permits

Teens under 18 must get a Work Permit from the school district in which they live or go to school. Co-op students must get a special Cooperative Education Employment Permit from the superintendent or designated official at their school.

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 x470, or www.mass.gov/dia, for more information.

PROHIBITED JOBS FOR PERSONS UNDER 18

*There are special exemptions that allow co-op student to perform some tasks usually prohibited for teens under 18. These tasks are **starred*** below and allowed only under special criteria, including hazardous task training for students, and closely supervised intermittent performance.*

- 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 *
- Use power-driven metal-forming, punching, or shearing machines *
- Use buffing or polishing equipment *
- Manufacture brick, tile, or kindred products
- Manufacture or store explosives
- Work in excavation *
- Work in forest fire fighting, forest fire prevention, timber track operations, and forestry service
- Work in wrecking, demolition, or shipbreaking
- Work in logging, sawmilling, or mining
- Work slaughtering, packing, or processing meat and poultry*
- Work in railway operations *
- Work in roofing or on or about a roof *
- Work in foundries or around blast furnaces *
- Work manufacturing phosphorus or phosphorus matches *
- Work where they are exposed to radioactive substances
- Work as a firefighter or engineer on a boat *
- Oil or clean hazardous machinery in motion *
- Work in any job requiring the possession or use of a firearm

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

MA Office of the Attorney General (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 Division of Occupational Safety (oversees the work permit process).....(617) 626-6952
MA Department of Industrial Accidents (oversees the workers' compensation system).....(800) 323-3249 x470

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

