

FAQ: High School Students in the Workplace

Q: Don't federal and state laws restricting child labor prevent high school students from working in many industries?

A: Most employers will find they need to make only minimal changes to comply with child labor laws. The guidelines for adult employees often apply to youth under 18 as well. While there are some specific regulations based on age, type of work, and hours, employers can easily remain in compliance by familiarizing themselves with the key policies relevant to their industry.

[List of hazardous jobs](#)

[Manufacturing](#)

[Exemptions for Youth Apprentices](#)

Q: Does OSHA have special regulations on workplace safety for young people?

A: OSHA's safety guidelines for youth workers are generally the same as for adults. Employers must provide appropriate safety training and create an environment where students feel comfortable asking questions. Being proactive about safety is key.

Q: Am I liable if a student gets hurt on the job?

A: Employers' liability for apprentices is typically the same as for other employees, and they are usually covered under existing workers' compensation policies. D214 students and parents sign a waiver for work-based learning and it is available upon your request. Employers may also consult their insurance carrier and legal counsel for additional advice.

Q: What if our corporate insurance policy prohibits students under 18 in our workplace?

A: Many employers have worked with their insurers to adjust policies and remove restrictions on hiring high school students. It's worth discussing with your insurance provider to explore possible changes.

Q: Do I have to pay students?

A:

- **Internships:** An internship can be unpaid if it meets specific criteria under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), which Illinois follows: [FACT SHEET](#)
 - The internship is similar to training that would be given in an educational environment.
 - The internship benefits the intern, not the employer.
 - The intern does not displace regular employees.
 - The employer derives no immediate advantage from the intern's activities.
 - There is no guarantee of a job at the end of the internship.
 - Both the intern and employer understand that the internship is unpaid.
 - **Apprenticeships:** Youth apprenticeships are paid positions with escalating wages. Apprenticeships are a structured program that combines on-the-job training, competencies and related technical instruction.
 - **Volunteers:** Youth can volunteer without pay, but this is typically in nonprofit, charitable, or public sectors. Volunteering should not replace paid work or be used as a substitute for hiring paid employees.
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Q: When can high school students work?

A: Federal law allows 16- and 17-year-olds to work without restrictions on hours. For those under 16, work hours are limited, especially on school days. States may impose additional regulations.

Q: My sector handles confidential and sensitive information. Can high school students work with that data?

A: Yes, students can work with confidential information, provided they sign confidentiality agreements, which are common in industries like financial services and healthcare.

Q: Can I require drug tests or health screenings for high school interns?

A: Yes, you can apply the same health and safety requirements to high school interns as you do to adult employees. Parental permission may be needed for certain tests.