

Young Worker Bill of Rights

California Partnership for Young Worker Health and Safety

In California, there are 5.6 million youth between the ages of 16 and 24. Of these, approximately 52% are employed. These workers are California's future. But most young workers enter the workforce with little understanding of their protections in the workplace and without the skills to effectively and proactively recognize and address problems on the job. They are injured at higher rates than workers over age 24, they are more likely to be sexually harassed on the job, and they typically work in low-wage, high-turnover jobs with unpredictable schedules and limited training and support. California's young workers deserve respect, fair treatment, safe workplaces—and knowledge about their own rights, responsibilities, and protections.

The right to know about workplace rights

Every California youth should receive information about their workplace rights, responsibilities and protections before they enter the workplace. This should include information about fair wages; hours of work including requirements about breaks; health and safety rights; the right to workers' compensation if injured on the job; and anti-discrimination laws. Youth employment programs and high school-based programs should be well-funded and prepared to teach this information to youth before they enter the world of work. The training provided should include the development of critical thinking skills to recognize and help address workplace problems, and be delivered in a language and manner young workers understand.

The right to safe, well-supported job opportunities

Youth employment programs should be well-funded to support safe and healthy early work experiences for young workers, including active support to employers to ensure they provide appropriate training, supervision and mentoring, and meet all labor standards.

The right to a safe workplace

Under current law, all workers have the right to a safe and healthy working environment, with training about all the hazards on their job, ; to the proper safety equipment to work safely; to report hazards and injuries without fear of retaliation, and to refuse dangerous work when proper safety precautions are not met. These rights exist for young, short-term, part-time and temporary workers—all workers.

The right to fair wages, fair scheduling and breaks

Under current law, most workers have the right to the minimum wage. They have the right to an unpaid meal break of at least 30 minutes for shifts of 5 hours or more, and to a paid 10 minute rest break for every 4 hours of work. Workers also deserve predictable schedules, and guarantees that part-time workers be offered more hours before new workers are brought on.

The right to fair treatment and respect on the job

Under current law, all workers have the right to work free from harassment, exploitation, and discrimination. Workers have the right to fair and equal treatment, regardless of religion, race, nationality, immigration status, gender, gender expression, sexual orientation, or disabilities.

The right to workers' compensation

Under current law, workers have the right to workers' compensation benefits if you are hurt on the job, including workers under age 18. These include medical care for your injury, whether or not you miss time from work; payments if you lose wages for more than 3 days; and other benefits if you become permanently disabled.

The right to join or help organize a union

Under current law, all workers have the right join or help work with others to form a union without fear of retaliation.

The right to special protections from hazardous work for workers under 18

Under current law, workers under the age of 18 are protected from working in many hazardous jobs, and from working too late, too long, or too early. These protections should be reviewed and revised as new hazardous work is identified.

The Young Worker Partnership is coordinated by the Labor Occupational Health Program and administered by the Commission on Health and Safety and Workers' Compensation in the California Department of Industrial Relations.