



Work Safe! Activity

Taking Action for Health and Safety

THIS ACTIVITY AT A GLANCE

This activity has been adapted from “Work Safe!,” a curriculum for youth employment programs developed by the Labor Occupational Health Program at UC Berkeley.

In this activity students will review key legal rights on the job by identifying the problems depicted in a short real-life scenario. They will then work in small groups to develop possible solutions to these problems, and role play their solutions for the whole class. Finally, the class will discuss what solutions are best.

Objectives

By the end of this activity students will be able to:

- Apply safety and child labor laws to “real life” situations.
- List 3 ways to get information and help on health and safety problems.
- Discuss several appropriate ways to approach supervisors about problems.

Materials Needed

- Student Handouts #1–3.
- Visual Aids #1–4, photocopied onto overhead transparencies, or printed on flipchart paper.
- Flipchart or chalkboard.

Total Time = 50 minutes

DETAILED TRAINER'S INSTRUCTIONS

A. Review legal rights on the job.

(10 minutes)

You can introduce students to their rights on the job using the Work Safe! Activity “Legal Rights on the Job,” distributed during Safe Jobs for Youth Month 2002, or available to download at youngworkers.org. Or you can follow steps 1 through 3 below, for a shorter introduction.

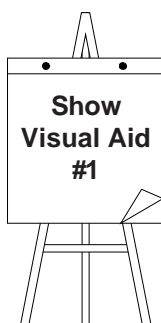
1. Explain that teens have important legal rights on the job. Child labor laws protect teens from working long or late hours, and from doing certain dangerous tasks on the job. Health and safety laws protect all workers, including teens, from job hazards. This lesson will review these rights and will cover how to take action in a positive way to solve health and safety problems.
2. Distribute Student Handout #1, *Are You a Working Teen?* and Student Handout #2, *Hurt on the Job? Information Alert for Teens*.
3. Point out the main topics covered in these two factsheets. Give a few examples of the type of information students can find on each page.
4. Ask everyone to spend 5 minutes looking over the information in the two factsheets. They will be doing this to prepare to critique the scenario.
5. After the class has had a few minutes to look over the factsheets, ask for volunteers to answer the following questions, and point out where they found the answer.
 - ◆ What are two types of work you cannot do if you are under 16?
Answer: dry cleaning, construction, manufacturing, loading/unloading, work on a ladder. (Handout #1, p. 3)
 - ◆ How late can teens work on school nights?
Answer: Until 7pm if you are 14 or 15, and until 10pm if you are 16 or 17. (Handout #1, p. 4)
 - ◆ What state agency can you call if there's a health and safety problem on your job?
Answer: Cal/OSHA. (Handout #1, p. 2 or p. 4)
 - ◆ What should you do if you get hurt on the job?
Answer: Tell your boss; get treatment; file a claim form. (Handout #2, p. 2)

6. If no one volunteers the answer, tell them. Explain that they will get more information on these and other legal rights issues in this activity.

B. Volunteers read the skit—Elena’s Story.

(5 minutes)

1. Pass out copies of Student Handout #3, *Elena’s Story*.
2. Ask for volunteers to play the roles of Elena, Mr. Johnson, and Joe. Have the volunteers come to the front of the class and read their parts aloud.



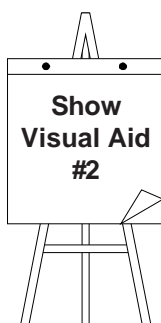
C. List laws that were violated.

(5 minutes)

- 1. Ask students what laws were violated in the story. Suggest they look at Handout #1, *Are You a Working Teen?* if necessary. As volunteers answer, write their responses on Visual Aid #1.

Possible answers include:

- Elena was not given information about the cleaning chemicals. (page 2)
- The employer didn’t give Elena protective clothing (gloves). (page 2)
- No worker under 18 may use a meat slicer. (page 3)
- No one who is 16 or 17 may work after 10pm on a school night. (page 4)
- Some students may interpret Mr. Johnson’s comments as a threat to fire Elena if she won’t work after 10pm. An employer may not threaten to fire someone because they won’t do something illegal.



- 2. Visual Aid #2 has the answers above. Remember that other answers may also be correct.

D. Small groups develop solutions.

(10 minutes)

1. Divide the class into groups of 3–6 students.
2. Explain that each group should come up with an alternate ending to *Elena’s Story*, showing what Elena could have done about the health and safety problems. Each group should choose one or two issues in the story to focus on.

3. Encourage groups to think about these questions:
 - How should Elena approach her supervisor about this problem?
 - What are the different ways her supervisor might respond?
 - Where else could Elena get help?
4. Groups may refer to the factsheets (Student Handouts #1–2) if necessary. Explain that they will role play their alternate endings in the next activity, and should keep good notes on their group discussion.

E. Groups role play their solutions.

(10 minutes)

1. Bring the class back together. Ask several of the groups (or all, if there is time) to act out their alternate endings to the *Elena's Story* skit.
2. Ask the class to comment on how effective each group's ending is.

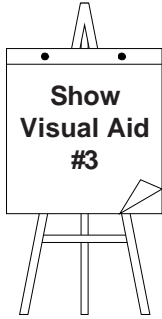
Possible endings include:

- Elena asks a co-worker, friend, parent, or teacher for advice.
- Elena tells her supervisor she is uncomfortable with the late hours and prohibited duties.
- Elena asks a union or community organization for information on workers' rights.
- Elena quits her job because of the long hours.
- Elena refuses to use the meat slicer because, by law, she is too young.
- Elena files a complaint with Cal/OSHA or Labor Standards Enforcement.

F. Discussion—Steps in problem solving.

(10 minutes)

1. Hold a class discussion of the pros and cons of the various approaches presented during the role play. Questions the class should consider include:
 - ◆ How serious is the problem? Is it urgent to get it corrected?



- ◆ Will any of these approaches endanger Elena’s job?
 - ◆ Which approaches will be most effective in solving the problem?
- 2.** Ask the class to name some basic steps to take to solve a problem at work. List the steps they mention on Visual Aid #3. Highlight the steps the class considers most important. Possible steps include:
- ◆ Get advice and support from co-workers, friends, and responsible adults.
 - ◆ Find out all you can about the problem. Study possible solutions and try to decide how effective they would be.
 - ◆ Decide what solution is best and work towards that goal.
 - ◆ Approach your supervisor politely. Suggest solutions. Bring someone with you for support if you wish.
 - ◆ Call a government agency for help if all else fails. Remember that Cal/OSHA enforces health and safety regulations, and Labor Standards Enforcement deals with wages, hours, and child labor laws.



- ◆ Know your rights and responsibilities!
- 3.** Use Visual Aid #4 to summarize the points above.
- 4.** Explain your own program’s guidelines for solving work-related problems (both safety and labor law issues).

TIPS FOR A SHORTER ACTIVITY

A shorter version of this activity can be presented in 20 minutes by following the outline below.

- 1. Explain the factsheets.** (5 minutes.) Pass out Student Handouts #1 and #2, and describe the general content of each page to the class.
- 2. Read the skit.** (5 minutes.) Have volunteers read the class *Elena's Story* (Student Handout #3).
- 3. List laws that were violated.** (5 minutes.) Ask the class to list problems they identify in the skit. They can use Student Handouts #1 and #2 to help.
- 4. Discuss possible approaches and problem-solving steps.** (5 minutes.) Ask the class what Elena could do to handle the problems shown in the skit. Explain the basic problem solving steps your program wants to promote. Finally, review the key points of this activity.

Are You a Working Teen?



**Protect Your Health
Know Your Rights**

Labor Occupational Health Program
University of California, Berkeley

2002

Student Handout #1–Page 2

Could I Get Hurt or Sick on the Job?

Every year **70 teens die** from work injuries in the United States. Another **100,000 get hurt** badly enough that they go to a hospital emergency room.

Here are the stories of three teens:

- 18-year-old Sylvia caught her hand in an electric cabbage shredder at a fast food restaurant. Her hand is permanently disfigured and she'll never have full use of it again.
- 17-year-old Joe lost his life while working as a construction helper. An electric shock killed him when he climbed a metal ladder to hand an electric drill to another worker.
- 16-year-old Donna was assaulted and robbed at gunpoint at a sandwich shop. She was working alone after 11 p.m.

Why do injuries like these occur? Teens are often injured on the job due to unsafe equipment, stressful conditions, and speed-up. Also they may not receive adequate safety training and supervision. Teens are much more likely to be injured when they work on jobs they are not allowed to do by law.

What Are My Rights on the Job?

By law, your employer must provide:

- A safe and healthful workplace.
- Training about health and safety, including information on chemicals that could be harmful to your health.
- Protective clothing and equipment.
- Payment for medical care if you get hurt or sick because of your job. You may also be entitled to lost wages.
- At least the minimum wage, \$6.75 an hour. In some cases, employers can pay less than minimum wage during your first 160 hours of work, if you have no previous similar experience. For more information, ☎ (888) 275-9243.

You also have a right to:

- Report safety problems to Cal/OSHA.
- Work without racial or sexual harassment.
- Refuse to work if the job is immediately dangerous to your life or health.
- Join or organize a union.

What Hazards Should I Watch Out For?

Type of Work	Examples of Hazards
Janitor/Clean-up	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Toxic chemicals in cleaning products• Blood on discarded needles
Food Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Slippery floors• Hot cooking equipment• Sharp objects
Retail/Sales	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Violent crimes• Heavy lifting
Office/Clerical	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stress• Harassment• Poor computer work station design

Student Handout #1–Page 3

Is It OK to Do Any Kind of Work?

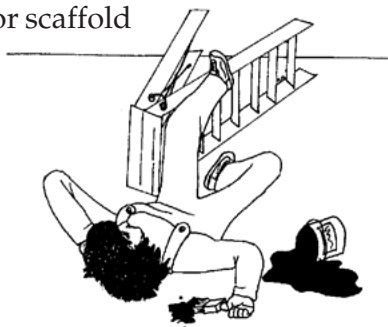
NO! There are laws that protect teens from doing dangerous work.

In California no worker under 18 may:

- Drive a motor vehicle on public streets as part of the job
- Drive a forklift
- Use powered equipment like a circular saw, box crusher, meat slicer, or bakery machine
- Work in wrecking, demolition, excavation, or roofing
- Work in logging or a sawmill
- Handle, serve, or sell alcoholic beverages
- Work where there is exposure to radiation

Also, no one 14 or 15 years old may:

- Do any baking or cooking on the job (except cooking at a serving counter)
- Work in dry cleaning or a commercial laundry
- Do building, construction, or manufacturing work
- Load or unload a truck, railroad car, or conveyor
- Work on a ladder or scaffold



Are There Other Things I Can't Do?

YES! There are many other restrictions regarding the type of work you can and cannot do.

If you are **under 14**, there are even stricter laws to protect your health and safety.

Check with your school counselor or job placement coordinator to make sure the job you are doing is allowed.

Do I Need a Work Permit?

YES! If you are under 18 and plan to work, you must get a work permit from your school or school district office (unless you have graduated).



What Are My Safety Responsibilities on the Job?

To work safely you should:

- Follow all safety rules and instructions
- Use safety equipment and protective clothing when needed
- Look out for co-workers
- Keep work areas clean and neat
- Know what to do in an emergency
- Report any health and safety hazard to your supervisor

Should I Be Working This Late or This Long?

Child labor laws protect teens from working too long, too late, or too early.

This table shows the hours teens may work. (Some school districts may have more restrictive regulations. Also, there are some exceptions for teens in Work Experience Education programs.)

Work Hours for Teens		
	Ages 14 and 15	Ages 16 and 17
Work Hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 am–7 pm, from Labor Day–June 1 • Not during school hours • 7 am–9 pm, from June 1–Labor Day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 am–10 pm when there is school the next day • 5 am–12:30 am when there is no school the next day
Maximum Hours When School Is in Session	18 hours a week, but not over: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 hours a day on school days • 8 hours a day Saturday–Sunday and holidays 	48 hours a week, but not over: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 hours a day Monday–Thursday • 8 hours a day Friday–Sunday and holidays
Maximum Hours When School Is not in Session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 40 hours a week • 8 hours a day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 48 hours a week • 8 hours a day



What If I Need Help?

- Talk to your boss about the problem.
- Talk to your parents or teachers.
- Talk to your job training representative.
- For health and safety information and advice, call the California Resource Network for Young Worker Health and Safety. Many materials are available in Spanish.

☎ (888) 933-TEEN

www.youngworkers.org

- If necessary contact one of these California government agencies (your local number can be found in the State Government pages).

➤ **Cal/OSHA** (under Industrial Relations Dept.) for information about making a health or safety complaint.

☎ (800) 963-9424

www.dir.ca.gov/DOSH

➤ **Labor Standards Enforcement** (under Industrial Relations Dept.) to make a complaint about wages or work hours.

☎ (415) 703-5300

www.dir.ca.gov/DLSE

➤ **Fair Employment and Housing** to make a complaint about sexual harassment or discrimination.

☎ (800) 884-1684

www.dfeh.ca.gov

You have a right to speak up!

It is illegal for your employer to fire or punish you for reporting a workplace problem.

Hurt on the Job? Information Alert for Teens

Every year, 70 workers under 18 die from job injuries in the U.S. and another 100,000 get hurt badly enough to go to a hospital emergency room. This is true even though child labor laws say employers can't give workers under 18 the most dangerous jobs.

If you get hurt on the job, your employer is required by law to provide **workers' compensation benefits**.

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 or if you are hospitalized overnight.
- Other benefits if you become permanently disabled.



Did You Know?

- ◆ You can receive benefits:
 - even if you are under 18.
 - even if you are a temporary or part-time worker, no matter how long you've had your job.
- ◆ You receive benefits no matter who was at fault for your job injury.
- ◆ You don't have to be a U.S. citizen to receive workers' compensation benefits.
- ◆ It's illegal for your employer to punish or fire you:
 - for having a job injury; *or*
 - for requesting benefits when hurt on the job.
- ◆ You can't sue your employer for a job injury (in most cases).
- ◆ You can see your own doctor if you give your employer the doctor's name and address *before* you are injured.

Student Handout #2–Page 2

What should I do if I get hurt on the job?

- Tell your boss right away. If you're under 18, tell your parents too.
- Get emergency medical treatment if needed.
- Your employer must give you a **claim form**. Fill it out and return it to your employer to request workers' compensation benefits.



How can I prevent a job injury?

Report unsafe conditions to your boss and your union. If you need help, talk to a responsible adult, such as a co-worker, parent, or teacher. If your employer doesn't fix the problem, you can call

Cal/OSHA, the state agency that enforces health and safety laws. For information about enforcement of child labor laws, call the state **Division of Labor Standards Enforcement (DLSE)**. Cal/OSHA and DLSE are listed in the phone book under: State Government Offices/Industrial Relations.

How can I find out more about workers' compensation?

- Talk to a supervisor or manager at work. Your employer is required by law to give you information about workers' compensation.
- Talk to your union rep, if you have one.
- Contact a state **Information & Assistance officer**. Call toll-free ☎ 1-800-736-7401. For a local office, check the Government Pages at the front of the white pages of your phone book. Look under: State Government Offices/Industrial Relations/Workers' Compensation.

This is one of a series of factsheets about workers' compensation. You can see **the other factsheets** on the Web. Many public libraries let you access the Web. Go to: www.dir.ca.gov. Through this Web site, link to: Commission on Health and Safety and Workers' Compensation. You can also contact the state Division of Workers' Compensation. Call toll free ☎ 1-800-763-7401, or check the Government Pages at the front of the white pages of your phone book. Look up: State Government Offices/Industrial Relations/Workers' Compensation/Information & Assistance.

This factsheet was designed and produced by the Labor Occupational Health Program (LOHP), University of California at Berkeley, under contract with the Commission on Health and Safety and Workers' Compensation.

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Illustrations by Peter Moreno.



The information in this factsheet is true in most situations. However, some **rules, exceptions, and deadlines** not covered here may apply to you and affect your case. To learn more, see the factsheet **For More Information**.

The information here describes the California workers' compensation system as of January 1998. It applies to most private, state, and local government employees whose "date of injury" is 1994 or later.

Elena's Story

Scene: Sandwich shop. Elena is a 17-year-old high school student. Mr. Johnson is her supervisor, and Joe is one of her co-workers. It is Thursday evening.

Mr. Johnson: Elena, Andre just called in sick so I need you to work extra hours. I'd like you to stay until 11 tonight.

Elena: But Mr. Johnson, I have a test tomorrow and I need to get home to study.

Mr. Johnson: I'm really sorry, but this is an emergency. If you want to work here you have to be willing to pitch in when we need you.

Elena: But I've never done Andre's job before.

Mr. Johnson: Here's what I want you to do. First, go behind the counter and take sandwich orders for a while. Ask Joe to show you how to use the meat slicer. Then, when it gets quiet, go mop the floor in the supply closet. Some of the cleaning supplies have spilled and it's a real mess.

Later: Elena gets the mop and goes to the supply closet.

Elena: Hey, Joe! Do you know what this stuff spilled on the floor is?

Joe: No idea. Just be careful not to get it on your hands. You really should wear gloves if you can find any. Andre got a rash from that stuff last week.

Developing Your Role Play

1. Discuss with the class what laws are being violated here.
2. Work in your small group to come up with a different ending to the story. Choose one or two problems in the story to focus on. Think about these three questions:
 - How should Elena approach her supervisor about these problems?
 - What are the different ways her supervisor might respond?
 - Where else could Elena get help?
3. Practice role playing your ending with your group. You will perform for the class later.

Visual Aid #1

Elena's Story

What laws were violated?

Elena's Story—Answers

What laws were violated?

- Elena was not given information about the cleaning chemicals.
(Are You a Working Teen?—page 2)
- The employer didn't give Elena protective clothing (gloves).
(Are You a Working Teen?—page 2)
- No worker under 18 may use a meat slicer.
(Are You a Working Teen?—page 3)
- No one who is 16 or 17 may work after 10pm on a school night.
(Are You a Working Teen?—page 4)
- An employer may not threaten to fire someone because they won't do something illegal.

Visual Aid #3

Problem Solving

What are some basic steps to take when there is a health and safety problem at work?

Visual Aid #4

Key Points–Taking Action

You can solve a workplace problem effectively if you:

- 1.** Get advice and support from co-workers, friends, and responsible adults.
- 2.** Find out all you can about the problem and possible solutions.
- 3.** Decide what solution is best and work towards that goal.
- 4.** Approach your supervisor politely. Suggest solutions. Bring someone with you for support if you wish.
- 5.** Call a government agency for help if all else fails.

Know your rights and responsibilities!

