



## Fact Sheet #38: Child Labor Rules for Employing Youth in Grocery Stores under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA)

This fact sheet provides general information concerning the application of the federal child labor provisions to grocery stores and supermarkets that employ workers who are less than 18 years of age. For detailed information about the federal child labor provisions, please read Regulations, [29 CFR Part 570](#).

The Department of Labor is committed to helping young workers find positive, appropriate, and safe employment experiences. The child labor provisions of the FLSA were enacted to ensure that when young people work, the work does not jeopardize their health, well-being, or educational opportunities. Working youth are generally entitled to the same minimum wage and overtime protections as older adults. For information about the minimum wage and overtime requirements in the grocery store and supermarket industries, please see [Fact Sheet 6](#) in this series, *The Retail Industry under the Fair Labor Standards Act*.

### Minimum Age Standards for Employment

The [FLSA](#) and the child labor regulations, issued at [29 CFR Part 570](#), establish both hours and occupational standards for youth. Youth of any age are generally permitted to work for businesses entirely owned by their parents, except those under 16 may not be employed in mining or manufacturing and no one under 18 may be employed in any occupation the Secretary of Labor has declared to be hazardous.

<b>18 Years of Age</b>	Once a youth reaches 18 years of age, he or she is no longer subject to the federal child labor provisions.
<b>16 &amp; 17 Years of Age</b>	Sixteen- and 17-year-olds may be employed for unlimited hours in any occupation other than those declared hazardous by the Secretary of Labor. Examples of equipment declared hazardous in food service establishments include:  <b>Power-driven meat and poultry processing machines</b> (meat slicers, meat saws, patty forming machines, meat grinders, and meat choppers), commercial mixers and certain power-driven bakery machines. Employees under 18 years of age are not permitted to operate, feed, set-up, adjust, repair, or clean any of these machines or their disassembled parts.

<p><b>16 &amp; 17 Years of Age Continued</b></p>	<p><b>Balers and Compactors.</b> Minors under 18 years of age may not load, operate, or unload balers or compactors. Sixteen- and 17-year-olds may load, but not operate or unload, certain scrap paper balers and paper box compactors under certain specific circumstances. (<i>See Fact Sheet #57:</i> in this series, Hazardous Occupations Order No. 12. Hazardous Occupations Order No. 12, <i>Rules for Employing Youth and the Loading, Operating, and Loading of Power-Driven Balers and Compactors under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA).</i>)</p> <p><b>Motor Vehicles.</b> Generally, no employee under 18 years of age may drive on the job or serve as an outside helper on a motor vehicle on a public road, but 17-year-olds who meet certain specific requirements may drive automobiles and trucks that do not exceed 6,000 pounds gross vehicle weight for limited amounts of time as part of their job. Such minors are, however, prohibited from making time sensitive deliveries (such as pizza deliveries or other trips where time is of the essence) and from driving at night. (<i>See Fact Sheet 34:</i> Child Labor Provision and the Driving of Automobiles and Trucks under the Fair Labor Standard Act.)</p>	
<p><b>14 &amp; 15 Years of Age</b></p>	<p>Fourteen- and 15- year-olds may be employed in restaurants and quick-service establishments outside school hours in a variety of jobs for limited periods of time and under specified conditions. Child Labor Regulations No. 3, 29 C.F.R. 570, Subpart C, limits both the time of day and number of hours this age group may be employed as well as the types of jobs they may perform.</p>	
	<p><b>Hours and times of day standards for the employment of 14- and 15-year-olds:</b></p>	<p><b>Occupation standards for the employment of 14- and 15-year-olds:</b></p>
<p><b>14 &amp; 15 Years of Age</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• outside school hours; school hours are determined by the local public school in the area the minor is residing while employed;</li> <li>• no more than 3 hours on a school day, including Fridays;</li> <li>• no more than 8 hours on a nonschool day;</li> <li>• no more than 18 hours during a week when school is in session;</li> <li>• no more that 40 hours during a week when school is not in session;</li> <li>• between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m.—except between</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They may perform cashiering, shelf stocking, and the bagging and carrying out of customer orders.</li> <li>• They may perform clean up work, including the use of vacuum cleaners and floor waxers.</li> <li>• They may perform limited cooking duties involving electric or gas grills that do not entail cooking over an open flame. They may also cook with deep fat fryers that are equipped with and utilize devices that automatically raise and lower the "baskets" into and out of the hot grease of oil. They may not operate NEICO broilers, rotisseries, pressure cookers, <i>fryolators</i>, high-speed ovens, or rapid toasters.</li> <li>• They may not perform any baking activities.</li> <li>• They may not work in warehousing or load or unload goods to or from trucks or conveyors.</li> <li>• They may not operate, clean, set up, adjust, repair or oil power driven machines including food</li> </ul>

<b>Continued</b>	June 1 and Labor day when the evening hour is extended to 9 p.m.	<p>slicers, grinders, processors, or mixers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They may clean kitchen surfaces and non-power-driven equipment, and filter, transport and dispose of cooking oil, but only when the temperature of the surface and oils do not exceed 100° F.</li> <li>• They may not operate power-driven lawn mowers or cutters, or load or unload goods to or from trucks or conveyors.</li> <li>• They may not work in freezers or meat coolers, but they may occasionally enter a freezer momentarily to retrieve items.</li> <li>• They are prohibited from working in any of the Hazardous Orders (discussed above for 16- and 17-year-olds).</li> </ul>
<b>Under 14 Years of Age</b>	Children under 14 years of age may not be employed in non-agricultural occupations covered by the FLSA, including food service establishments. Permissible employment for such children is limited to work that is exempt from the FLSA (such as delivering newspapers to the consumer and acting). Children may also perform work not covered by the FLSA such as completing minor chores around private homes or casual baby-sitting.	

### **Work Experience and Career Exploration Program (WECEP)**

WECEP is a program designed to provide a carefully planned work experience and career exploration program for 14- and 15-year-old youths who can benefit from a career oriented educational program designed to meet the participants' needs, interests and abilities. The program is aimed at helping youths to become reoriented and motivated toward education and to prepare them for the world of work.

State Departments of Education are granted approval to operate a WECEP by the Administrator of the Wage and Hour Division for a 2-year period. Certain provisions of child labor provisions are modified for 14- and 15-year-old participants during the school term.

- They may work during school hours.
- They may work up to 3 hours on a school day; and as many as 23 hours in a school week.
- They also may work in some occupations that would otherwise be prohibited under a variance issued by the Administrator, but they may not work in manufacturing, mining or any of the 17 Hazardous Occupations.

Individual employers may partner with participating local school districts in those states authorized to operate WECEPs.

### **Work-Study Program (WSP)**

WSP is a program designed to help academically oriented students enrolled in a college preparatory high school curriculum pursue their college diplomas. Some of the hours standards provisions of Child Labor Regulation No. 3 are varied for certain 14- and 15-year-old students participating in a Department of Labor approved and school-supervised and administered WSP. Participating students must be enrolled in a college preparatory curriculum and identified by authoritative personnel of the school as being able to benefit from the WSP.

Students enrolled in an authorized WSP:

- May work no more than 18 hours in any one week when school is in session, a portion of which may be during school hours, in accordance with the following formula that is based upon a continuous four-week cycle:
  - In three of the four weeks, the participant is permitted to work during school hours on only one day per week, and for no more than for eight hours on that day.
  - During the remaining week of the four-week cycle, such minor is permitted to work during school hours on no more than two days, and for no more than for eight hours on each of those two days.
  - The employment of such minors would still be subject to the remaining time of day and number of hours standards contained Child Labor Regulation No. 3 and discussed earlier in this fact sheet.
  
- Are held to all the occupation standards established by Child Labor Regulation No. 3.

### **Where to Obtain Additional Information**

**For more information on the FLSA child labor provisions, including a complete list of all hazardous occupation orders, visit the YouthRules! Web site at [www.youthrules.dol.gov](http://www.youthrules.dol.gov).**

For additional information on the Fair Labor Standards Act, visit the Wage and Hour Division Web site: <http://www.wagehour.dol.gov> and/or call our toll-free information and helpline, available 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. in your time zone, 1-866-4USWAGE (1-866-487-9243).

When state child labor laws differ from the federal provisions, an employer must comply with the higher standard. Links to your state labor department can be found at [www.dol.gov/whd/contacts/state\\_of.htm](http://www.dol.gov/whd/contacts/state_of.htm).

This publication is for general information and is not to be considered in the same light as official statements of position contained in the regulations.

U.S. Department of Labor  
Frances Perkins Building  
200 Constitution Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20210

1-866-4-US

WAGE  
TTY: 1-866-487-9243  
Contact Us