

Fact Sheet #52 — The Employment of Youth in the Health Care Industry

[The Fair Labor Standards Act \(FLSA\)](#) requires covered employers to pay employees at least the applicable federal minimum wage for [all hours worked](#) and [overtime pay](#) for hours worked over 40 in a work week. The FLSA also set standards under which youth under the age of 18 may be employed. The FLSA is administered by the Wage and Hour Division of the U.S. Department of Labor.

Hospitals and other institutions “primarily engaged in the care of the sick, the aged, or the mentally ill” are covered employers under Section 3(s)(1)(B) of the FLSA. Thus, hospitals, residential care establishments, skilled nursing facilities, nursing facilities, assisted living facilities, residential care facilities and intermediate care facilities for mental retardation and developmentally disabled must comply with the minimum wage, overtime and [child labor requirements](#) of the FLSA.

Summary

This fact sheet provides guidance regarding common child labor violations found by the Wage and Hour Division during investigations in the health care industry. Most violations of the FLSA’s child labor provisions in the long-term care industry occur in the dietary and housekeeping departments. Minors must be at least 14 years old to be employed in non-agricultural workplaces. There are limitations on the number of hours and times of day that 14- and 15-year-olds may work as well as the types of jobs they may perform. The FLSA does not restrict the hours that minors 16 years of age or older may work. However, minors aged 16 and 17 may not perform tasks that are deemed too hazardous for them to perform.

Hours of Work for 14- and 15-Year-Olds

The federal child labor provisions require that when 14- and 15-year-olds work, they must be employed:

- Outside school hours
- Not more than 40 hours during non-school weeks
- Not more than 18 hours per week when school is in session
- Not more than 8 hours in any one day when school is not in session
- Not more than 3 hours in any one day, including Fridays, when school is in session
- Between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. except during the summer (June 1 through Labor Day) when the evening hours are extended to 9 p.m.

Example #1:

At an assisted living facility, the chef’s 15-year-old son works in the dietary department from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. Occasionally he helps clean up with his father’s shift and works until 8 p.m. Is this allowed under Federal regulations? No. Fourteen- and 15-year-olds may not work outside the hours standards

even if working with a parent or guardian. A young worker would be exempt from the hours standards only if he or she were employed in a business solely owned by the parents.

Example #2:

May a 15-year-old begin working at 6 a.m. during the summer or on a weekend?

No, 14- and 15-year-olds may not work before 7 a.m. or after 7 p.m. except from June 1 through Labor Day when the evening hours are extended to 9 p.m.

Job Restrictions for 14- and 15-Year-Olds

Youth 14- and 15-years of age may perform a variety of jobs such as office work; sales work; run errands and make deliveries by foot, bicycle and public transportation. They may also perform a variety of food service jobs, including waiting on tables, bussing tables, dispensing food from a steam table or chafing dish, washing dishes, and preparing salads and other food. Cooking is prohibited for 14- and 15-year-olds except cooking with gas or electric grills (where the cooking does not involve cooking over an open flame) and except cooking with deep fat fryers that are equipped with and utilize automatic devices which lower and raise baskets into and out of the oil or grease. Fourteen- and 15-year-olds may not perform any baking activities or operate “Neico” broilers, pressurized fryers, high-speed ovens, rapid toasters, or rotisseries.

Fourteen- and 15-year-olds may clean cooking equipment, including the filtering, transporting, and disposal of oil or grease, but only when the temperature of the equipment surfaces and the oil or grease do not exceed 100° F. Fourteen- and 15-year-olds may not operate or tend most power-driven machinery, perform work in freezers or meat coolers, or work in any occupation declared hazardous by the Secretary of Labor.

Example #3:

A 14-year-old works as a dishwasher in the kitchen at a residential care facility. Sometimes she is called upon to do take pies out of the oven when the cook is doing inventory. Is this in accordance with the child labor laws?

No. Removing items from an oven is a “baking” activity and no one under 16 years of age may perform such tasks.

Example #4:

A 15-year-old helps out at a residential care facility on weekends. She mows the lawn and trims the bushes using a gas-powered lawn mower and electric clippers. Is this permissible?

No. Fourteen- and 15-year-olds may not operate power driven machinery other than office machines and certain food preparation machines.

Example #5:

A 15-year-old works in the dietary department at a skilled nursing facility. When there are snowstorms, he helps out with snow blowing and snow shoveling. Is this allowed?

No, the youth is too young to legally operate a power-driven snow blower on the job. Snow shoveling, however, would be allowed.

Hazardous Occupation Orders

Seventeen (17) hazardous non-farm jobs are out of bounds for youth under the age of 18. In the health care industry, the most common hazardous occupations violations occur in food service and housekeeping jobs.

Hazardous Order No. 10 prohibits minors under 18 from operating, cleaning, setting up, disassembling and reassembling, repairing and oiling power-driven meat processing machines—including meat slicers—regardless of the material being processed.

Hazardous Order No. 11 prohibits minors under 18 may form setting up, operating, assisting other to operate, cleaning, oiling, adjusting or repairing power driven bakery machines. This includes horizontal and vertical dough mixers; batter mixers; bread dividing, rounding or molding machines; dough breaks; dough sheeters; cookie and cracker machines; and cake cutting band saws.

Hazardous Order No. 7 prohibits minors under 18 from operating or assisting in the operation of power-driven hoists, including those designed to lift and move patients. The Wage and Hour Division has, however, adopted an enforcement position effective July 13, 2011, that allows certain properly trained 16- and 17-year-old nursing aides or nursing assistants, to assist trained adults in the operation of certain power-driven patient/resident hoists/lifts under certain conditions. The enforcement position is explained in the Wage and Hour Division Field Assistance Bulletin 2011-3 available at http://www.dol.gov/whd/FieldBulletins/fab2011_3.htm.

Hazardous Order No. 12 prohibits minors under 18 from loading, operating, and unloading balers and compactors used in waste disposal and recycling. There is a limited exemption that allows 16- and 17-year-olds to load, but not operate or unload, certain scrap paper balers and paper box compactors under very strict conditions. Please read Fact Sheet No. 57 of this series for information about that exemption.

Example #6:

A food service director at an assisted living facility has 17-year-olds working in the kitchen. The director prohibits them from operating the power driven meat slicing machine. They are, however, allowed to dismantle, clean the parts and reassemble the parts. Does this comply with the FLSA?

No, youth under age 18 may not disassemble or reassemble such machines. They may not hand wash the individual parts of a machine even when someone over 18 years of age has disassembled the machine. Sixteen- and 17-year-olds may, however, run a rack of such disassembled parts through a commercial dishwasher as long as the minors do not touch or handle the parts..

Example # 7:

A facility treating individuals with developmental disabilities employs workers to bake breads and rolls. This requires the operation of power driven dough mixers. The 16- and 17-year-olds operate these machines. Does this violate the FLSA?

Yes, this is a violation of the FLSA child labor rules. Under HO 11, workers must be at least 18 years of age to operate power-driven dough mixers.

Example # 7:

A large nursing home employs two 16-year-olds to collect trash and waste paper throughout the facility and load it into the large commercial trash compactor located on the loading dock. The firm rents the compactor from a waste management firm. The minors also routinely operate the compactor by turning the key and pressing the “on” button. Does this violate the FLSA?

Yes, this is a violation of the FLSA. HO 12 prohibits youth under the age of 18 from loading, operating, or unloading compactors and balers. Although, under a limited exemption, 16- and 17-year-olds may load (but not operate or unload) certain paper box compactors and scrap paper balers, they may do so only under some very stringent conditions. One such condition is that each machine must be equipped with an on-off switch incorporating a key-lock or other system and the control of the system must be maintained in the custody of employees who are at least 18 years of age. In this example both the loading and operating of the compactor by these minors violated the FLSA.

Example #8:

A 17-year-old orderly at a private hospital assists the nurse in moving a patient from her bed to a chair using a power-driven patient hoist/lift. Does this violate the provisions of the FLSA?

Yes; this is a violation of the FLSA child labor rules. HO 7 prohibits workers under 18 years of age from operating or assisting in the operation of most hoists. Prior to July 19, 2010, the child labor provisions included an exemption that permitted 16- and 17-year-olds to operate electric- and air-powered hoists of less than one ton capacity, but this exemption has been repealed.

Where to Obtain Additional Information

For additional general information, visit our Wage and Hour Division Website:

<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).

For more information regarding the FLSA child labor provisions, including a complete list of all hazardous order occupations, visit the **YouthRules!** Web site at www.youthrules.dol.gov.

The FLSA statute appears at [29 U.S.C. § 201](#) et seq. The federal regulations regarding hours worked appear in [29 C.F.R. Part 785](#).

When the state laws differ from the federal FLSA an employer must comply with the higher standard. Links to your state labor department can be found at 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.

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