

Young worker safety

Tips for educators

Young workers are at risk

A large proportion of young Victorians combine study with part-time, casual or seasonal work. Some engage in work as part of an apprenticeship, traineeship or other structured workplace learning program, while many secondary school students participate in work experience placements.

For most young people, working is a positive and valuable experience; however, there can be health and safety risks for young people entering the workforce.

Injury rates

In Victoria, young workers aged 15 to 24 have the highest proportion of work-related injury – 17% higher than the average across all age groups.

Young workers also have a higher rate of hospitalisation – 21% higher than other age groups.

The highest injury rates for young people occur in:

- retail (especially fish shops and takeaway food)
- cafes and restaurants
- manufacturing (particularly in meat products, metal fabrication, wood and joinery sectors), and
- construction (especially plumbing, electrical and carpentry work).

Types of injuries

The most common types of injuries experienced by young people include sprains, strains and muscle tears; lacerations; fractures and burns. Young workers are also more likely to be subjected to bullying and occupational violence.

Why are young workers vulnerable?

Young workers:

Are usually still developing physically and mentally:

- there can be tasks that will be beyond their current capabilities.

May lack the experience, knowledge or skills to:

- understand the risks involved in the tasks they are doing
- take appropriate steps to protect themselves and their workmates from injury.

May do work they are not able to do because they:

- have not been properly trained or are not being properly supervised
- have been working with dangerous equipment or substances where safe work practices have not been adopted.

May not be aware of their rights and responsibilities in terms of workplace health and safety:

- they may not ask questions or speak out if there is a problem for fear of looking incapable or losing their job.

What can educators do?

As a secondary or TAFE teacher, work placement co-ordinator and/or careers advisor, you can help students entering the workforce by incorporating health and safety material into the curriculum when:

- preparing years 9 and 10 students for work experience placements
- preparing VET students for structured workplace learning placements
- delivering VET training packages
- working with VCAL students in school, TAFE or community settings, and
- training students in apprenticeships and traineeships.

OHS can also be incorporated into VELs – particularly at Level 6, when students are often engaged in their first casual jobs.

OHS resources that can be used by educators

WorkSafe will soon have a webpage for educators. In the meantime, we have developed some health and safety resources for educators to use to raise students' awareness and knowledge of health and safety issues.

A short DVD *Unsafe work: What would you do?* has been developed by WorkSafe along with classroom notes to help students understand their rights and responsibilities in terms of health and safety. For a copy, email teachingresources@worksafe.vic.gov.au

Further information available from the young worker page of the WorkSafe website – **www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/youngworkers** includes:

- A short factsheet for young workers:
Safety tips for young workers
- A guide for employers and supervisors of young workers: *Your health and safety guide to managing young workers*
- *Training checklist for work experience and structured workplace learning students*
- *Training checklist for young workers*

Our 'Injury Hotspots' also show an industry-wide snapshot of how people get injured and what can be done to prevent these injuries. The interactive website can be accessed at **www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/hotspots**

When preparing students for work experience and structured workplace learning placements, refer to the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's guidelines and manuals **<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/sensecyouth/careertrans/worklearn/default.htm>**

Australian Safety and Compensation Council's (ASCC) national guidelines entitled *Student work placement: A health and safety guide for educators and employers* are also informative. These are available from: **www.ascc.gov.au/NR/rdonlyres/F47CB668-1FF5-4FF7-892B-754BC8187DC6/0/Studentplacementguide.pdf**