

# Young worker safety

## Tips for parents and guardians

### This fact sheet is for you if...

You have a son or daughter between 15 and 24 years old who is working:

- Permanently full or part time
- Casually full or part time
- On labour hire
- As an apprentice or trainee
- As part of a work experience or structured workplace learning program.

### Young workers are at risk...

In Victoria, young workers are **more likely to be injured at work** than any other age group, and their injuries are **more likely** to be **severe**.

### Why are young workers at higher risk of being injured?

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 you can do

Young workers need advice and support both in and outside of the workplace. There are ways you can help build your son/daughter's awareness of workplace health and safety and protect them from injury.

### Know your son/daughter's workplace safety rights and responsibilities

All employees – including young workers – are entitled to a safe and healthy workplace.

It is the **employer's** responsibility to keep **all** employees **safe and healthy at work**, regardless of the type and terms of their employment. This includes protection from physical and psychological workplace hazards, such as slippery floors, lifting heavy loads, faulty machinery, bullying, violence, fatigue and work-related stress.

**Young workers** have the responsibility to **work safely** and not put their workmates at risk. Young workers also have the responsibility to cooperate with their employer's efforts to make the workplace safe.

**Young workers** who are participating in a **work experience program must** complete the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development occupational health and safety [safe@work](mailto:safe@work) online modules before they start their placement.

### Find out about your son/daughter's work and what's involved

What kind of **tasks** are they asked to do at work, and what kind of **equipment** are they asked to use? For example, do they:

- Lift heavy objects?
- Work on ladders, stairs, scaffolding or other raised areas?
- Use knives or food slicers?
- Work with hot substances or equipment?
- Drive or ride in vehicles or work with or near mobile equipment?
- Work near equipment or machinery that is in operation?

What are the potential **workplace hazards** and **risks** and what measures are in place to **control** them?

Ask your son/daughter their opinion of the workplace. For example:

- Are there slippery floors?
- Are there machines without safety guards?
- Do they feel intimidated or threatened by their employer, supervisor, workmates or customers?

Help them think about what changes are needed and why, and whose help might be needed.

### **Ask about training and supervision**

Have they received any training?

- Are they getting meaningful safety training **before** they start a new job **and each new** task?
- Encourage and support them to ask for training or help if they don't know how to do something safely, or aren't sure, **before** they begin each new task.

Are they supervised?

- Does their supervisor encourage and provide opportunities to ask questions or seek help if needed?
- Does their supervisor follow up promptly on reported workplace health and safety concerns?

### **Talk about health and safety**

Talk to your son/daughter about their job, including any health and safety concerns they might have.

- Reinforce that they have a right to a safe and healthy workplace.
- Encourage and support them to report any workplace hazard, injury or illness right away to their immediate supervisor and/or health and safety representative (if there is one in the workplace), no matter how small it might seem.
  - Work experience or structured workplace learning program students should also report workplace hazards, injuries or illnesses to their program coordinator.
- Encourage them to find out more for themselves about the health and safety aspects of their job.
- Share your own workplace health and safety experiences.

- Find out more about your own workplace – what does your employer do to protect young workers?
- Talk to other parents with working sons/daughters about workplace health and safety.
- Talk to local youth and parent groups about young worker health and safety.

### **Model health and safety at home**

- Use protective equipment when doing things like mowing the lawn and using power tools.
- Use proper techniques when moving or lifting heavy or awkward objects.
- Wear the right gear for recreational activities, such as bike helmets and lifejackets.

### **Want to know more?**

Consider speaking or meeting with your son/daughter's employer if you have concerns about their health and safety at work.

- If your son/daughter is participating in a work experience or structured workplace learning program, contact the program co-ordinator.
- Contact your son/daughter's TAFE or university if they are doing a work placement as part of their course.
- For further information about work experience, visit the Department of Education & Early Childhood Development website at <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/sensecyouth/careertrans/worklearn/default.htm>

If you would like to know more about young worker health and safety:

- Visit [www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/youngworkers](http://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/youngworkers)
- Call the WorkSafe Advisory Service on **1800 136 089** (toll free) – you can call for advice or lodge concerns anonymously.