

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

OVERVIEW

Youth employment programs in Michigan provide valuable work experience, income, and skill development for young people. However, such programs also have inherent risks, including workplace injuries, legal compliance issues, and supervision challenges. Implementing effective risk control strategies is crucial to safeguarding the health and safety of young workers, complying with labor laws, and reducing an organization's liability.

AREAS OF POTENTIAL RISK EXPOSURE

Numerous considerations must be addressed before hiring and while employing youth workers. Establishing relevant policies and procedures beforehand is essential to avoid post-hiring issues. The following areas of exposure should be taken into account.

- Workplace Safety
 - Youth workers, especially those new to the workforce, may be less familiar with workplace hazards, increasing the likelihood of accidents or injuries.
 - Common risks include equipment operation, slips and falls, manual lifting, and exposure to chemicals or dangerous substances.
- Legal and Regulatory Compliance
 - Violation of Michigan's labor laws for youth employment, including restrictions on working hours, types of work, and supervision requirements for minors.
 - Failure to obtain student work permits, which are required even for temporary summer work.
 - Non-compliance can lead to lawsuits, or penalties that might not be covered under the organization's insurance policy.
- Inadequate Supervision
 - Youth workers may lack the experience to handle certain tasks independently, leading to potential accidents.
 - Youth workers commonly need closer one-on-one supervision to learn and master the job assigned to them.
 - Lack of proper oversight and mentorship can result in poor work practices, increased risk of injury, or work-related disputes.

- Sexual Harassment and Discrimination
 - Young workers may be vulnerable to harassment, bullying, or discrimination, especially if they are unaware of workplace policies or their rights.

Employers must have clear policies and training to mitigate these risks.

REDUCING YOUR EXPOSURE

The ultimate goal is to provide employees of all ages a safe workplace while reducing liability. Implementing preventive measures in the following areas can help accomplish this.

- Enhanced Training and Safety Programs
 - *Comprehensive Orientation:* Institute a robust orientation program that includes safety training specific to the youth's job role. It should cover safe equipment handling, hazard recognition, and emergency procedures.
 - *Job-Specific Training:* Provide continuous, role-specific training tailored to youth workers' tasks. Include hands-on demonstrations and allow young workers to ask questions. A detailed job description can assist in identifying training needs.
 - *Mentorship Programs:* Pair youth employees with experienced mentors who can guide them through tasks, ensuring proper execution and providing immediate feedback.
 - Perform a background check on anyone who will be supervising or working closely with youth employees.
- Strict Adherence to Labor Laws and Regulations
 - *Work Hour Monitoring:* Automate systems to track and monitor the work hours of youth employees, ensuring compliance with Michigan's labor laws for minors, which include restrictions on hours during school days, weekends, and holidays.
 - *Prohibited Task Enforcement:* Maintain a list of restricted tasks and ensure that youth workers are not assigned dangerous or inappropriate work that violates Michigan's laws. Supervisors should be trained to enforce these restrictions. The Michigan Department of Education's five [Youth Employment Informational Sheets](#) provide helpful details.
 - This [Frequently Asked Questions](#) on The Youth Employment Act 90 of 1978 - YESA (409.101 - 409.124) provides clear guidance on your obligations as an employer.
- Supervision and Accountability
 - *Designated Youth Supervisors:* Assign specific supervisors responsible for youth workers. These supervisors should be trained in managing younger employees, understanding their developmental needs, and recognizing the unique risks they face.

- *Regular Check-ins and Evaluations*: Schedule regular check-ins and performance reviews to ensure youth workers adhere to safety protocols and progress in their roles. This can also identify early signs of burnout or unsafe behavior.
- Harassment and Discrimination Prevention
 - *Zero-tolerance policies*: Establish clear anti-harassment and anti-discrimination policies that are communicated to all employees. Ensure youth workers understand their rights and feel comfortable reporting inappropriate behavior.
 - *Training and Workshops*: Conduct regular training on harassment, discrimination, and creating an inclusive work environment for all employees, including youth workers and their supervisors.
 - *Anonymous Reporting Channels*: Set up anonymous reporting mechanisms for young workers to report incidents without fear of retaliation.
- Ergonomics and Equipment Safety
 - *Youth-Specific Ergonomic Assessments*: Conduct ergonomic assessments tailored to youth workers' physical needs and limitations. Ensure that workstations, tools, and equipment are safe and adjusted to prevent injuries.
 - *Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)*: Provide appropriate PPE, such as gloves, helmets, or protective eyewear, based on the tasks performed. Ensure that PPE fits younger workers properly.
 - *Regular Equipment Maintenance*: Schedule regular maintenance and safety checks on equipment to reduce the likelihood of malfunctions or accidents involving youth workers.
- Emergency Preparedness and Response
 - *Emergency Drills*: Conduct regular emergency drills that include youth employees so they are prepared to respond effectively in an emergency, such as a fire, natural disaster, or workplace injury.
 - *First-Aid Training*: Ensure that supervisors are trained in first aid and that youth employees know how to access first-aid resources in case of an injury.

CONCLUSION

Implementing these risk control solutions in Michigan's youth employment programs can create a safer and more supportive work environment for young employees. This helps to minimize risks for employers and promotes a positive educational experience for youth, contributing to their development as responsible, skilled workers.

INFORMATION RESOURCES

Frequently Asked Questions on the Youth Employment Standards Act:

https://www.michigan.gov/leo/-/media/Project/Websites/leo/Folder11/YESA_FAQS.pdf

MI Department of Education – Five Informational Sheets on the Youth Employment Standards Act:

<https://lsa.umich.edu/content/dam/lsa-site-assets/documents/human-resources/LaborLawNotices/MI%20Youth%20Employment%20Standards%20Posting.pdf>

***Contact MML Risk Management Services Staff/
or your Loss Control Consultant for more information.***



Important Phone Numbers

MML Risk Management Services	734.662.3246 or 800.653.2483
Loss Control Services	800.482.0626

Note:

***This document is not intended to be legal advice.
It only identifies some of the issues surrounding this topic.
Public agencies are encouraged to review their procedures with an expert
or a competent attorney who is knowledgeable about the subject.***