Work Rules Relevant to Youth With Disabilities

When working with employers in your efforts to assist youth with disabilities to take their place in the workforce, all parties must be aware of labor laws that pertain to young people. There are variety of federal laws that are designed to protect young people participating in the labor force and a number of workplace activities that are restricted based on an employee’s age.

While young people can benefit immensely early employment experiences, complying with these laws add a level of complexity. For example, a 15 year-old falls under a different set of rules (e.g. maximum work hours a week) than 16 year-old. There are also a number of states also have labor laws that may be more restrictive than federal standard. Understanding these rule can help you, help an employer avoid problems in terms of arranging appropriate work experiences for young people. You can learn about [general age-related rules](http://www.youthrules.gov/know-the-limits/index.htm)

{{ http://www.youthrules.gov/know-the-limits/index.htm}} and find out more about state specific regulations using their [interactive map](http://www.youthrules.gov/law-library/state-laws/index.htm) {{ http://www.youthrules.gov/law-library/state-laws/index.htm }} .

The Department of Labor’s Wage and Hour division has a webpage devoted to [child labor laws](https://www.dol.gov/whd/childlabor.htm) {{ https://www.dol.gov/whd/childlabor.htm }} that contains fact sheets on labor laws that pertain to specific industries and well as additional training materials, employer self-assessments, and other publications. You may be particularly interested in reviewing the fact sheets related to [Internships](https://www.dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/whdfs71.pdf) {{ https://www.dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/whdfs71.pdf }} and [sub-minimum wage](https://www.dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/whdfs39.pdf) {{ https://www.dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/whdfs39.pdf }}. You may want to refer to these and other materials as you develop employment opportunities for youth to assure that placements are compliant with the law.

An additional issue that counselors should be aware of in creating job opportunities involves the safety of young people at the workplace. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration has a page devoted to the [safety of young workers](https://www.osha.gov/youngworkers/index.html) {{ https://www.osha.gov/youngworkers/index.html }}. Here you will find information about typical hazards that young people have, or may encounter, in various industry settings and also has information on strategies how to avoid injuries in the workplace. Having this knowledge is likely to enhance your credibility when discussing placements with potential employers who have concerns about safety issues when hiring young candidates with disabilities.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission has designed a website called [Youth@Work](https://www.eeoc.gov/youth/) {{https://www.eeoc.gov/youth/}} as part of a national outreach and educational initiative to help young workers understand their rights and avoid workplace discrimination. While much of this information is relevant for workers of all ages, it may be of help in educating young people with limited work experience about their workplace rights and protections.

There are emerging changes related to pre-employment and transition services as a result of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act may seem overwhelming. Please remember that there is help. The federal government has established a number of [technical assistance centers](http://transitionta.org/sites/default/files/JYTAC%20Snapshot%20with%20images%20and%20alt%20text.pdf) {{ http://transitionta.org/sites/default/files/JYTAC%20Snapshot%20with%20images%20and%20alt%20text.pdf }} that can support your efforts in helping youth transition into young workers.