



# Illinois Child Labor Law: What School Staff Should Know

**The Illinois Child Labor Law regulates employment of workers under 16 years of age.**

**Employers are allowed to hire 14 and 15-year-olds if the work situation meets the requirements of the Illinois Child Labor Law. Generally, employers are not allowed to hire children aged 13 and younger.**



## School Oversight of Child Employment

- Illinois Child Labor Law requires any child under age 16 who wants to work to obtain an employment certificate from their school's Issuing Officer. The Regional or District Superintendent of Schools appoints Issuing Officers;
- Issuing Officers should review any child's application for a work permit and evaluate whether the work is physically and academically appropriate for the child, including whether the child is old enough to work and physically capable to perform the job, and that the job will not interfere with the child's education; and
- The Illinois Department of Labor (IDOL) maintains a list of School Issuing Officers (usually a member of administrative staff such as the principal or a guidance counselor) across the state. If you are unsure of who a school's Issuing Officer is, contact IDOL at (312) 793-5570.

## Prohibited Hazardous Occupations

There are several occupations which are considered "hazardous", and which employers **may not allow children to work in at all**. These include but are not limited to:

- work in/around exposed power-driven machinery (except ice cream shops);
- any hazardous factory work;
- work around materials such as explosives, alcohol, oil & gas, spray paint, lead, or other dangerous chemicals;
- metalworking or woodworking;
- laundry;
- construction; and
- meat/fish processing.

If you are unsure whether a child's work situation is hazardous, contact IDOL to discuss.



## Work Hours

In addition to the regular labor law protections that all workers enjoy, such as the right to be paid for all hours worked, including the overtime rate for anyone who works more than 40 hours in a week, and the right to be paid the applicable minimum wage (at least \$15 per hour for adults and \$13 per hour for workers under 18), child workers have the following protections:

- Working hours are limited for children under 16. **Employers may not allow children to work before 7 a.m.** and after 7 p.m. However, work until 9 p.m. is allowed from June 1 through Labor Day;
- **Employers may not allow a child** to work more than 24 hours in a week when school is in session; and
- **Employers must provide all children under 16** with a minimum 30-minute meal break for every 5 hours worked.

## Mistreatment of Child Workers

Children are a particularly vulnerable group of workers. The following circumstances may warrant further attention from school staff or other concerned community members:

- A child who describes or displays an injury or illness caused by work;
- A child who misses school due to work or falls asleep at school;
- A child who lives with their employer or at the job site; or
- Any other mention of a possible Child Labor Law violation.

## Protections for Child Workers

IDOL's priority is the well-being of the child.

- IDOL will only take enforcement action against employers, not child workers or their families;
- Every worker is entitled to legal protections, regardless of immigration or work authorization status. This includes not only the Child Labor Law, but wage and hour laws such as the Minimum Wage Law, day and temporary worker protections, and all other labor laws enforced by IDOL; and
- IDOL does not ask about the immigration/work authorization status of workers, and does not report any information to immigration authorities.
- Retaliation against a child worker is a violation of the Illinois Child Labor Law.

**Please contact IDOL if you suspect or have concerns about an employer who may be illegally employing children.**

### Contact Numbers

**Child Labor Information:**  
(312) 793-5570  
**Child Labor HOTLINE:**  
(800) 645-5784 (toll-free)

### Contact Email:

**For general questions about child employment,**  
e-mail: [dol.childlaborquestions@illinois.gov](mailto:dol.childlaborquestions@illinois.gov)  
**To report possible child labor violations,**  
e-mail: [dol.childlaborcomplaints@illinois.gov](mailto:dol.childlaborcomplaints@illinois.gov)  
**To provide a copy of an approved child work certificate,** e-mail to: [dol.childlaborlaw@illinois.gov](mailto:dol.childlaborlaw@illinois.gov)

