

Youth rights in the workplace



Did you know?

In 2003, B.C. lowered the working age from 15 to 12 and reduced protections for young workers. This means that B.C. has the lowest working age of all industrialized countries and that young workers are getting injured more often.

Youth often do not report their injuries or unsafe work environments--either because they don't know who to report situations to or because they don't want to get themselves or employers in trouble.

Youth who know about their rights are less likely to be victimized and more likely to stand up for themselves and others.

BUT!! No one can stand up for their rights—whether it be at school, at work, or in their community—unless they know what their rights are.

Facts From First Call's 2013 Child Labour Report:

60% of young people who participated in the study started work at the age of 14 or under.

Only 24% of them reported that a parent had given written permission for them to start work, as required by the current legislation.

Approx. 1/3 of participants worked in food services and accommodation, fields other provinces prohibit children from working in.

9% of participants said that their first job was in construction, a field often restricted for children in other jurisdictions.

Do you know if the following REAL WORLD situations are rights violations, or allowed in B.C.?

SCY interviewed a range of youth and adults to find real world examples of workplace situations.

- You are asked to wear a mid-thigh skirt, low cut shirt and high heels to work
- You are asked to work a 2 hour shift in Richmond when you live in Langley
- You are 14 and are asked to work a night shift
- You are asked to “try out” a shift without pay
- You are 15 and are asked to work during school hours
- You are asked to read a training manual at home or do an online orientation session without being paid for your time
- You are working and doing the same job for less pay than the person working next to you
- You are 15 years old and you are asked to supervise a 13 year old employee
- You are asked to work for less than minimum wage

If you don't know whether these scenarios are permissible, check out WorksafeBC for resources on workplace rights and responsibilities for young workers. The answers will surprise you!

If you have a concern or complaint about a possible violation of your workplace rights, contact the Labour Relations Board of BC, or the BC Employment Standards Branch.



Learn More

First Call's Child Labour Is No Accident: The Experience Of BC's Working Children