

Employing teens under 18 in food service?

L&I's fact sheet of permitted and prohibited work activities for youth ages 14 to 17 in food service



Here's what's permitted for minors:

Work activities ALL minors can do:

- Use of knives and non-powered slicers.
- Occasional walking in and out of coolers and freezers to retrieve or store products in the course of other routine work in a restaurant, grocery store, or other retail setting.

Machines ALL minors can operate:

- Dishwashers
- Popcorn poppers
- Espresso machines
- Coffee grinders
- Toasters
- Waffle irons
- Blenders
- Coffee machines

For 16- and 17-year-olds ONLY:

- Use of electric hand-mixers that are ½ horsepower or less.
- Use of table top food mixers and food processors that are ½ horsepower or less, or 5 quarts or less.
- Cooking or baking and use of microwaves.
- Handling and wrapping meat, poultry or seafood in a grocery store, restaurant or other retail setting.

Are teen workers allowed to drive as part of their job?

Limited, occasional driving on public roadways is permitted for 17-year-olds only as long as it's not a regular job duty. Workers aged 14-16 are prohibited from driving on public roadways.

On the L&I website, go to Workplace Rights and click on "Administrative Policies", to find "Driving by Minors in Non-agricultural Jobs", ES.C.4.3.

Here's what's prohibited for all minors:

Minors are NOT permitted to do ANY work involving:

- Slaughtering animals, meat packing, processing, or rendering in commercial packing and processing facilities. Find WAC 296-125-030(9) at www.Lni.wa.gov/Teenworkers and click on "Prohibited Duties." Scroll down to the bottom of the "All Youth Under 18 Years Old" section.
- Powered food slicers, including slicers for meat, poultry, seafood, vegetables, cheese and bread. Student-learner exemption may apply (see next page). Find WAC 296-125-030(9) at www.Lni.wa.gov/Teenworkers and click on "Prohibited Duties." Scroll down to the bottom of the "All Youth Under 18 Years Old" section.



Washington State Department of
Labor & Industries
Employment Standards / Workplace Rights

Upon request, foreign language support and formats for persons with disabilities are available. Call 1-800-547-8367. TDD users, call 711. L&I is an equal opportunity employer.

- Power-driven bakery machines. Using and cleaning are both prohibited. This includes large Hobart mixers, powered bread-slicers and pizza dough rollers. Find WAC 296-125-030(10) at www.Lni.wa.gov/Teenworkers and click on “Prohibited Duties.” Scroll down to the bottom of the “All Youth Under 18 Years Old” section.
- Garbage compactors, trash compactors or other compactors, paper balers or other balers. Loading, unloading and operating are prohibited.
- Exposure to blood or other potentially infectious materials.
- Activity done at least 10 feet above ground or floor level, such as when using a ladder.
- Freezers and coolers, if the work in these environments is prolonged. Entry to retrieve or store products is permitted. Fourteen- and 15-year-olds may not enter meat coolers.
- After 8:00 p.m. without an adult employee, who is on the premises at all times.

Student-learner variance for powered food slicers

A student-learner variance allows youth ages 16-17 to operate selected machinery that would otherwise be prohibited in a worksite. Powered meat, poultry, seafood, vegetables, cheese and bread food slicers may be used under the student-learner variance with the following conditions:

1. The student-learner is enrolled in a course of study and training in a paid, cooperative vocational worksite program under a recognized state or local public school, registered apprenticeship, or in a substantially similar program at a private school.

2. The student-learner variance from L&I requires the following:
 - a. The work of the student-learner must be incidental to the training.
 - b. The work must be intermittent, for short periods of time, and under the direct and close supervision of: a journey-level worker; qualified, experienced instructor; or mentor.
 - c. Safety instruction must be given by the school and combined with on-the-job training by the employer.

There are specific obligations for employers and schools or training programs with this variance. See L&I Policy ES.C.11 (www.Lni.wa.gov/workers-rights/_docs/esc11.pdf) for details.

Hours of Work

Based on age, there are different restrictions for the hours of work for 14- and 15-year-olds and 16- and 17-year-olds. The hours of work permitted for youth vary during school weeks and non-school weeks. See www.Lni.wa.gov/TeenWorkers and click on “Hours of work” for details.

Variances are available for teens to work longer hours. The employer must fill out the application and submit it to L&I. See www.Lni.wa.gov/TeenWorkers and click on “Variances” in the left hand column. Go to the “Minor Work Variance” tab for more information.

Note: Variances for extended hours are unavailable to 14- and 15-year-olds.

For more information and resources

www.Lni.wa.gov/TeenWorkers