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Hiring Iowa teens: What an employer needs to know



Iowa youths are eager to work. Especially during the summer months. To a teenager, a job means money for school and other expenses, work experience, and may help in deciding on a career path.

As an employer, you should be aware that Iowa Child Labor laws restrict both hours and types of work.

Time and Hour Restrictions: 14- and 15-year olds

June 1 — Labor Day

- Summer recess
- 7 a.m. to 11 p.m.
- Eight-hour work day
- 30-minute break after 5 hours worked
- 40 hours per week

Labor Day — June 1

- School in session
- 7 a.m. to 9 p.m.
- Six-hour shift on school days
- Eight-hour shift on weekends
- 30-minute break after 5 hours worked
- 28 hours per week

Applies to all public, private and homeschool minors.
No hour restrictions for minors over 16 years old.

Appropriate Tasks

Tasks allowed for 14- and 15-year-olds

- Retail, food service, and gasoline service establishments
- Office and clerical work, including operation of office machines
- Cashiering, selling, modeling, artwork, advertising departments, window trimming, and comparative shopping
- Price marking and tagging, assembling orders, packing, and shelving
- Bagging and carrying out customers' orders.
- Errand and delivery work by foot, bicycle, or public transportation
- Cleanup work, including vacuum cleaners and floor waxers, and maintenance of grounds
- Kitchen work and other work involved in preparing and serving food and beverages
- For motor vehicles and trucks: dispensing gasoline and oil, courtesy service, car cleaning, car washing, and car polishing
- Cleaning vegetables and fruits
- Wrapping, sealing, labeling, weighing, pricing, and stocking goods
- Loading and unloading from motor vehicles non-power-driven hand tools and personal protective equipment that the minor will use as part of their employment
- Laundering
- Removal of off-type plants and corn tassels and hand-pollinating from June 1 through Labor Day

Tasks allowed for 15-year-olds

- Loading and unloading non-power-driven equipment into motor vehicles (up to 30 pounds)
- Loading and unloading groceries and other retail items into motor vehicles (up to 30 pounds)
- Stocking shelves (up to 30 pounds)
- Lifeguard and swim instructor

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Prohibited Tasks

Prohibited tasks for those under 16

- Manufacturing
- Mining
- Processing except when specifically allowed by statute
- Duties in workrooms or workplaces where goods are manufactured, mined, or processed
- Public messenger service
- Hoisting apparatus and power-driven machinery
- Transportation of persons or property
- Warehousing and storage
- Communications and public utilities
- Construction, including repair
- Boiler or engine rooms
- Maintenance or repair of an establishment, machines, or equipment
- Working from windowsills, ladders, scaffolds, or their substitutes
- Cooking, except at soda fountains, lunch counters, snack bars, or cafeteria serving counters, and baking
- Power-driven food slicers and grinders, food choppers and cutters, and bakery-type mixers
- Loading and unloading goods to and from trucks, railroad cars, or conveyors.
- Warehouses, except office and clerical work

Prohibited tasks for all minors

- Plants or establishments that manufacture or store explosives or articles containing explosive components.
- Logging and the operation of any sawmill, lath mill, shingle mill, or cooperage-stock mill
- Power-driven woodworking machines
- Radioactive substances and to ionizing radiations
- Power-driven hoisting apparatus
- Power-driven metal forming, punching, and shearing machines
- Mining
- Slaughtering and meat packing establishments and rendering plants
- Power-driven bakery machines except for pizza dough rollers with required safety features
- Power-driven paper products machines. See Iowa Code chapter 92 for the baler exception
- Manufacturing brick, tile, and related products
- Circular saws, band saws, and guillotine shears
- Wrecking, demolition, and shipbreaking operations
- Roofing
- Excavation
- Foundries, except for the office, shipping, and assembly areas
- Dry cleaning or dyeing machinery
- Exposure to lead fumes or its compounds, or to dangerous dyes and chemicals
- Transmission, distribution, or delivery of goods or messages 10 p.m. to 5 a.m.
- Nude or topless dancing establishments

More information on child labor laws

This is a summary of the child labor laws in Iowa. For further details on tasks allowed, tasks prohibited, and exemptions see Iowa Code chapter 92.

Minors serving alcohol

Minors aged 16 and 17 may serve alcohol if certain conditions are followed. For more information, visit the website for the Alcoholic Beverages Division of the Iowa Department of Revenue.

Federal law

Federal child labor laws are more restrictive than Iowa child labor laws. Employers should seek legal advice to determine if they are to comply with federal child labor laws. For more information on federal restrictions, visit the Wage and Hour Division website of the U.S. Department of Labor or call 1.866.487.9243.

If you have any questions or wish to report a child labor violation, contact:

Iowa Department of Inspections, Appeals, and Licensing • Wage and Child Labor Unit, Investigations Division
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