



NEWS

JB Pritzker, Governor

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Back to School, Back to Work – But First Get an Employment Certificate

It's the law that children under 16 need a certificate to work at most jobs in Illinois

SPRINGFIELD – Young people in Illinois either have or soon will return to schoolwork -- either remotely or in person or some of both. And a lot of those young people will also try to find work outside of school. In Illinois if you're under 16 years old and looking for a job, you also need to get an employment certificate.

Minors who are 14 or 15 may work in Illinois, but they must first obtain an employment certificate. Illinois' child labor law is designed to protect the physical safety of children on the job, as well as to make their education a priority.

“I am always happy to see young people who want to join the workforce, but child labor laws are necessary to make sure kids stay safe and don't let their jobs get in the way of their education,” said Illinois Department of Labor Director Michael Kleinik.

Fourteen- and 15-year-olds seeking employment need to start by getting a letter of intent to hire from their prospective employer. The letter should describe the type of work and the hours to be worked.

The young person and a parent or guardian must present the letter and the required support documents to their school or school district office - in person or electronically - to request an employment certificate. The issuing school administrator will review criteria and any safety issues to determine whether to issue the work permit.

Given the ongoing concern with COVID-19, parents may wish to call their school district first to ask how they are handling the permit process. An emergency rule was approved earlier this year that allows for a remote application process – using video- or teleconferencing – if in-person application is not feasible.

Employers who employ teens under 16 without having an employment certificate on the premises are subject to fines by the Illinois Department of Labor.

Children 14 and 15 years of age may work up to three hours per school day and up to 24 hours per week when school is in session. The combined hours of school and work cannot exceed eight hours per day. When school is not in session – summer vacations, holidays and weekends – the restrictions are no more than eight hours per day, no more than six days per week and no more than 48 hours per week.

These young people can work between the hours of 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. except between June 1 and Labor Day when the evening hours can be extended to 9 p.m.

Some exceptions to the Illinois Child Labor Law do exist. The law does not apply to the sale and delivery of magazines and newspapers outside the hours that school is in attendance. Likewise, jobs in private homes such as baby-sitting or yard work are exceptions and do not require an employment certificate.

The law also seeks to keep younger workers safe. It prohibits 14-year-olds and 15-year-olds from working in businesses where alcohol is served, on construction jobs, at service stations and other places that might include dangerous work or machinery.

The Illinois Department of Labor offers a Child Labor Hotline - 800-645-5784 - to answer questions about the law.