

---

## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release  
2021LBR0027-001400  
July 21, 2021

Ministry of Labour

### **New rules protect young workers**

VICTORIA – New changes to employment standards will better protect young people at work by raising the general working age in British Columbia from 12 to 16 and defining the types of jobs appropriate for those under 16.

These new rules bring British Columbia in line with international standards for children’s employment. They will come into force on Oct. 15, 2021, to allow employers and children who are already working to adjust to the new requirements.

“Work experience can be a rewarding growth opportunity for young people, but it should never compromise their safety,” said Harry Bains, Minister of Labour. “We know that most employers make safety their top priority for all their workers, and these changes clarify what types of employment are age-appropriate for young workers.”

These changes to the Employment Standards Act were initiated through legislation in spring 2019. Consultations were held with more than 1,700 youth, parents and employers from multiple sectors prior to finalizing the changes this year.

Youth aged 14 and 15 will be able to do many appropriate jobs, defined as “light work,” with permission from a parent or guardian. In some cases, children aged 14 and 15 may be permitted to do work outside the definition of light work with a permit from the Ministry of Labour’s Employment Standards Branch.

Examples of light work appropriate for 14 and 15 year olds include:

- recreation and sports club work, such as lifeguard, coach, golf caddy, camp counsellor, referee and umpire;
- light farm and yard work, such as gardening, harvesting by hand, clearing leaves and snow, and grass cutting;
- administrative and secretarial work;
- retail work, such as stocking shelves, packaging orders, laying out displays, sales and cashier;
- food service work, such as bussing tables, preparing food, dishwashing and serving food and non-alcoholic drinks; and
- skilled and technical work, such as computer programmer, visual artists, graphic designer, writer and editor.

The new rules do not prevent children from babysitting or delivering newspapers part time, or students from working in a work study or work experience class. As well, the current rules will continue to apply to young performers in recorded and live entertainment. Children aged 12 and above can continue to be employed in a business or on a farm owned by an immediate

family member, as long as the work meets the safety criteria set out in the regulation.

Prior to these changes, B.C. was the only province in Canada that allowed the employment of children as young as 12. In some cases, this involved hazardous situations or environments, such as construction sites or heavy-industry settings. As a result, young workers are injured on the job every year, with WorkSafeBC data reporting more than \$1.1 million paid in job-related disability claims for workers 14 or younger between 2007 and 2016.

Work is also underway to define “hazardous work” for 16 to 18 year olds, with regulatory changes expected later this year to bring the legislation into force.

“We are committed to protecting B.C.’s workers of all ages from unsafe working conditions and unfair labour practices,” Bains said. “And we are improving B.C.’s employment standards to reflect the evolving needs of our workplaces. I look forward to continuing that work.”

The regulations have also narrowed the employment standards exclusion for home-care workers and babysitters who provide care to an adult or a child in a private residence. This change ensures that caregivers who provide care averaging more than 15 hours per week will have the protections under the Employment Standards Act, while those providing in-home care and babysitting services for fewer hours can continue to work under more flexible arrangements.

#### **Quotes:**

##### **Mark von Schellwitz, vice-president Western Canada, Restaurants Canada –**

“In the restaurant industry, we rely on young workers to fill many of the jobs, especially at the entry level. So we welcome this clear direction on what constitutes appropriate employment for them. Restaurateurs want all staff and their families to know that when they join our workforce, their duties will be safe and suitable for their age and experience.”

##### **Andrea Sinclair, president, BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils –**

“All parents prioritize education for their children, but we know that a classroom is not the only place of learning. Many families see the value of their teenagers gaining skills and experience through part-time jobs or in a family business. The new guidelines assist parents in deciding which jobs will be safe for their children and assures them that employers will now be informed on what is permitted.”

##### **Chelsea Enns and Albert Gorter, owners/operators, Morningstar Farm, Parksville –**

“As farmers, we know that family farming and ranching is the lifeblood of B.C.’s agricultural sector, and we want to encourage and support these multi-generational operations. It’s important to have a balanced approach to employment for young people; a model that allows farm kids to safely contribute, learn the ropes and build a passion for the family business.”

A backgrounder follows.

**Contact:**

Ministry of Labour  
Media Relations  
250 213-8637

---

Connect with the Province of B.C. at: [news.gov.bc.ca/connect](https://news.gov.bc.ca/connect)

---

## BACKGROUND

For Immediate Release  
2021LBR0027-001400  
July 21, 2021

Ministry of Labour

### **Protecting B.C.'s youngest workers**

In spring 2019, government passed amendments to the Employment Standards Act to ensure B.C.'s employment standards are applied evenly, properly enforced and reflect the evolving needs of workers and employers.

A key feature of the amendments was improving protections for children in the workforce by limiting the types of work children under 16 can undertake. Light work was defined after public and stakeholder engagement.

The engagement received extensive feedback from parents, employers and young people about how best to protect children in the workplace and what types of jobs or duties are safe for children under the age of 16. The resulting regulations have carefully considered the need to ensure youth are employed safely, without restricting important activities, such as sports coaching or working on family farms and businesses.

Occupations that are now prescribed as light work appropriate for youth 14 and 15 include:

- Cashier
- Golf caddy
- Messenger or courier
- Performing artist
- Referee or umpire
- Server of food or drink, other than alcohol
- Summer or day camp leader
- Visual artist or graphic designer
- Computer programmer
- Lifeguard or lifeguard assistant
- Peer counsellor
- Recreation or community program attendant
- Salesperson, other than door-to-door
- Sports or recreational coach or instructor
- Tutor or instructor
- Writer, editor or similar

Occupations or situations that are now generally treated as unsafe for youth under 16 include:

- repairing, maintaining or operating heavy machinery;
- places where a minor is not permitted to enter;
- construction sites, heavy manufacturing and heavy industrial work;
- sites designed to retain an oxygen-deficient or toxic atmosphere;

- walk-in freezers or coolers, other than to place or retrieve an item;
- handling substances that minors cannot legally purchase, use or distribute;
- lifting, carrying or moving heavy items or animals; and
- using, handling or applying hazardous substances, such as pesticides.

**Contact:**

Ministry of Labour  
Media Relations  
250 213-8637

---

Connect with the Province of B.C. at: [news.gov.bc.ca/connect](https://news.gov.bc.ca/connect)