

Ensure teen knows workplace safety

YOUR child is applying for summer jobs. Starting his first real job is exciting and stimulating. It is a step toward the independence he craves.

There are many advantages to a good summer job for teens. The obvious one is money; he will be earning to save for his post-secondary education or the extra spending money or both.

You will likely see changes that will surprise you. He will become more mature because he has this new role with responsibilities no matter how small. He will learn that he needs to follow the rules of the workplace. He will have to be organized in order to get to work on time and may have to be flexible if he is working shifts. He will also



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learn how to follow orders and how to be part of a team.

But, he may not do as good a job of ensuring his safety and awareness of his rights in the workplace. Recently, I was having a lovely lunch with friends on the upper level of a two-level patio. Right below us, young workers were installing a temporary roof for the

summer.

One young man was carrying a large roll of plastic up a ladder. Watching him was difficult because the load was too heavy, his arms and legs were shaking, his body covered in sweat and he looked terrified. It was an industrial accident waiting to happen.

He should have insisted that they figure out a safer way to handle the job. But, my guess is that he was typical of most young workers.

They believe they are invincible and will not be hurt; they're inexperienced, are unaware of their rights on the job, they lack confidence and they're afraid to ask questions.

They are unprepared for the workplace. They lack the training they need to keep

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Model safe practice at home

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themselves safe.

Bored kids often don't pay strict attention, which leads to accidents. Unless they've been taught how to handle physical jobs, they are likely to be hurt lifting or pulling. Also, some supervisors don't take safety seriously and may not have any safety training themselves.

That's the bad news. The good news is that we can inoculate our children and help them prepare for their first foray into the world of work.

Before he starts his first job, it's a good idea for you to do some research and discover what his rights are. The best place to start is at worksafebc.com. Under Safety at Work on the main menu bar, go to Topics/Young Worker, then Resources/Parents and look at the materials in the Parent Resource Kit.

The videos on Youtube and printed materials will give you the information you need to help your child be a safe worker.

Another way we help our kids is by our actions. Modelling safe practices at home is the first and most important step.

When you are cutting the lawn do you wear sturdy footwear? Do you wear a helmet when cycling and a lifejacket in the boat? Are you careful with knives in the kitchen? When lifting a heavy object, do you use your legs instead of your back and ask for help if it's too heavy? And do you talk to the kids about what you are doing and why?

When your child goes for a job interview, let her know that it's OK for her ask questions. She can ask about risks on the job and about the safety training they can expect.

Once they have the job, talk to them about it. Ask about their duties, and listen carefully. For example, if he is a cook and handles grease have him describe what they do to stay safe from burns.

Probably the most important thing you can do is educate your child about his rights. Kids are afraid that if they ask for help or training they will be fired.

With good training and awareness, your child's first job can be a growth experience that will be the first of a lifetime of work experiences.

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