



# FINANCE

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## Child Labor

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### Quick Facts...

For most non-agricultural employment, children may not work until they are 14 years old.

Youth ages 14 to 15 are not allowed to work during regular school hours; cannot work more than three hours on any day; and cannot work more than 18 hours a week during the school year.

For agricultural employment, children as young as 10 may work in certain non-hazardous, non-minimum wage jobs when a parent is working on the same farm.

Youths under the age of 16 are prohibited from working in hazardous environments unless granted an exemption.

Throughout most of the history of the United States there were few, if any, laws protecting children from abuses in the workforce. Children were prevented from attending school because they were required to work long hours at often dangerous jobs. Employers hired children because they could be paid considerably less than most adults.

Child labor laws came into existence to stop these abuses. On June 25, 1938, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed into effect the Fair Labor Standards Act. This was the first law to effectively improve working conditions and limit the number of hours children were allowed to work. It also protected their health and safety and made it easier for them to stay in school, therefore advancing the general welfare of the nation.

### Non-Agricultural Requirements for Employment

There are restrictions on the age at which children can work, the number of hours they may work, and the times that they may work. Those restrictions include:

- In general, a child must be at least 14 years old to be employed in most jobs.
- For children ages 14 to 15, they may not work during school hours and on school days they may work only three hours a day.
- On non-school days, 14 to 15 year olds may work up to eight hours in a day.
- During school weeks these children may not work more than 18 hours during the week.
- During non-school weeks (i.e., summer vacations), youth may not work more than 40 hours during the week. In addition, the hours of work are restricted between 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., (except between June 1 and Labor Day when the end of day standard is 9:00 p.m.).
- Fourteen year olds may perform most office jobs, some retail jobs, and many jobs in restaurants and fast food operations. They may also perform jobs around the house, such as babysitting, paper delivery, and assigned "chores."

There are also certain jobs that are prohibited. For those under the age of 16, work in manufacturing, mining, construction, transportation, or any work around machinery is prohibited.

### Agricultural Requirements for Child Employment

In agricultural jobs the following requirements must be adhered to:

- Children as young as 10 years old may perform jobs on farms owned or operated by the parent(s) of the child or with a parent's written consent.

*For further information on child labor laws, please see the following Web sites:*

*Frequently Asked Questions About Child Labor: [www.stopchildlabor.org/USchildlabor/fact1.htm](http://www.stopchildlabor.org/USchildlabor/fact1.htm)*

*Colorado Child Labor Laws: <http://laborstand.cdle.state.co.us/>*

*Child Labor Requirements In Agriculture Under The Fair Labor Standards Act: [www.ae.iastate.edu/safety/clb102.htm](http://www.ae.iastate.edu/safety/clb102.htm)*

• Minors who are permanent residents and are at least 10 to 11 years of age may be employed outside school hours to help harvest short season crops. They can work no more than eight weeks between June 1 and October 15 in any calendar year, upon approval of an employer's application for a waiver from the child labor provisions for such employment by the Secretary of Labor.

• Children 10 to 11 years of age must work outside school hours and in non-hazardous jobs that are not covered by minimum wage requirements.

• For slightly older children, ages 12 to 13, the same basic restrictions apply, except that minimum wage restrictions become applicable.

• Youth ages 14 to 15 may perform any non-hazardous farm job outside of school hours.

• Youths 16 and older may perform any job, hazardous or not, for unlimited hours.

• Minors under the age of 16 may not be employed during school hours unless employed by their parent or guardian. School hours are those set for the school district in which a minor is living while employed in agriculture.

The Secretary of Labor determined there are eleven major categories of occupations in agriculture that are hazardous for minors under the age of 16 to perform. No minor under 16 years old may be employed at any time in these occupations unless given an exemption. The exemptions may be granted for the following reasons:

• Student-learners in a bona fide vocational agriculture program may work in certain hazardous occupations under a written agreement which provides that the student-learner's work is incidental to training, intermittent, for short periods of time, and under close supervision of a qualified person; that safety instructions are given by the school and correlated with on-the-job training; and that a schedule of organized and progressive work processes has been prepared.

• Minors 14 to 15 years old who hold certificates of completion of either the tractor operation or machine operation program may work in the occupations for which they have been trained.

• Minors 14 to 15 years old who hold certificates of completion from either the tractor operation or machine operation program of the U.S. Office of Education Vocational Agriculture Training Program may work in the occupations for which they have been trained.

## Summary

Child labor laws in the United States and Colorado allow children as young as 14 to work in non-agricultural jobs as long as the children do not work any more than three hours on a school day or more than 18 hours in a school week. During non-school periods, children may work up to eight hours in any 24 hour period and up to 40 hours in a week. For individuals over the age of 16, there is no limit on the number hours that can be worked.

For agricultural jobs, children as young as 10 may be employed in non-hazardous, minimum wage exempt jobs, as long as a parent or guardian owns or operates the farm or has given written permission for the child to work. Youths over the age of sixteen may work any job, hazardous or not, in an agricultural environment.

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