

Supervising young workers in the service industry

Congratulations. You've just hired a young worker between the ages of 16 and 24. Now comes the challenging part.

Training young workers is different from training other age groups. You'll need to communicate differently. And you'll need to spend more time coaching about safety. The first few days or months on the job are risky times for injuries. And young workers are at an even greater risk. Here's why:

Inexperience.

Just because they heard it once, doesn't mean they learned it. Assign a mentor to observe and coach young workers until new skills have been proven. Follow up frequently once they're on their own.

Overconfidence.

Young workers often lack the experience to perceive hazards and don't know what they don't know. Set clear expectations. Explain why you're asking them to do things a certain way and what risks they may face.

Risk-taking.

Invincibility applies to superheroes. Be clear that following safety rules reduces injuries. Explain the consequences for using equipment improperly and behaving inappropriately.

Peer pressure.

Impressing friends and being part of the crowd is a big motivator at this age. Emphasize the potential long-term consequences of unsafe actions. Use peer pressure to your advantage in training sessions.

1. Be brief.

Short messages work best. Be clear and concise.

2. Do it again.

Train on the same thing more than once.

3. Tell, show, do.

Explain the task, perform the task while they watch, and then ask them to do the task on their own while the trainer observes.

4. Encourage speaking up.

Tell young workers you expect them to let you know if they're unsure about a task or feel unsafe.

5. Provide information.

Ensure that young workers know the laws governing the types of work they can do, the hours they are allowed to work, and that you, their employer, are following these rules.

6. Listen.

Young workers may be uncomfortable admitting they don't understand. Solicit feedback regularly.

7. Identify hazards.

Teach them how to find hazards and report them. Show them the safety features of the equipment and machinery they'll be using.

8. Use personal protective equipment.

Provide young workers with the gear they need and show them how to use it properly.

9. Report injuries.

Set the expectation for them to report all injuries and incidents immediately. Make sure they know how to report.

10. Acknowledge good work.

Reinforce positive behavior by praising young workers when they work safely.


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Training tips