

Role of Work Permits in Teen Work Experiences in North Carolina

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Introduction

- **In North Carolina a work permit is required for youth <18 years.**
- **Federal child labor laws encourage but do not require employers to file permits, also called “Work Certificates” in other states.**
- **To date the work permit system has not been evaluated to determine whether the issuance of work permits ensures:**
 - **Employment in age-appropriate jobs free of health safety hazards**
 - **Compliance with Hazardous Work Orders**
 - **Compliance with daily and weekly work hour restrictions**

Objectives

- **Compare work experiences of teens with work permits, with work experiences of teens without work permits, with respect to:**
 - **Receiving safety training**
 - **Being informed of child labor laws and workers' rights**
 - **Working in hazardous and illegal occupations**
 - **Performing illegal hazardous tasks (violation of hazardous work orders)**
 - **Working long and/or late hours in violation of child labor laws**

North Carolina Work Permit System

- Not required for teens < 18 years working in enterprises not covered by federal child labor laws: agriculture, government (public service) and domestic jobs.
- As of 2004 permits can be issued on line and submitted to the Dept. of Labor.
- Hard copies of permits are issued by the Dept. of Social Services and filed with the Dept. of Labor.
- Proof of age is required.
- Screening.

Methods

- **School based survey.**
- **Conducted in 16 randomly selected high schools in NC (Oct –Nov 2005).**
- **Eligibility:**
 - **teens who had worked in any paid job outside the home during the last two years**
- **Excludes: domestic and agricultural employment.**
- **Anonymous 15-20 minute questionnaire.**
- **Non-working students provided only socio-demographics.**

Survey Response

- **Response rate is 73.8-86.6% using CASRO definition**
- **844 working students completed the whole questionnaire**
- **1094 non-working students completed socio-demographic section only**

Characteristics of Sample

• White	60.3%	492.1
• Male	48.8%	405.3
• Age at survey (≥ 16)	85.8%	711.4
• Type of job:		
Services	54.4%	430.2
Cashiers and sales	25.9%	205.0
• Business not owned totally by parents	87.1%	725.8
• Education of mother (above high school)	57.4%	471.4
• Education of father (above high school)	47.5%	387.7
• Urban	50.9%	429.5

Association Between Issuance of Work Permits and Safety Training

	Adjusted OR	Unadjusted OR
• Work Permit Yes vs. No	2.28 (1.35,3.83) *	2.24 (1.47, 3.43)*
• Age 16-17 vs. <16 (when started working)	1.13 (0.77,1.66)	1.54 (1.15,2.06)*
• Race		
Black vs. White	1.54 (0.98,2.41)*	1.60 (1.15,2.45)*
Other vs. White	1.05 (0.60,1.84)	0.99 (0.60,1.65)
• Family bus.		
No vs. Yes	0.79 (0.45,1.38)	1.59 (1.08,2.34)*
• Job type		
Service vs. Laborers	1.06 (0.59,1.91)	1.46 (0.82,2.59)
Cashiers vs. Laborers	0.88 (0.49,1.58)	1.27 (0.70,2.31)
Admin vs. Laborers	0.49 (0.15,1.63)	0.50 (0.17,1.47)
Manager. vs. Laborers	0.95 (0.46,1.96)	0.97 (0.43,2.22)
• Work duration 3-6 vs.<3 (Months) >6 vs.<3	1.89 (1.20,2.97)* 1.84 (1.04,3.25)*	1.62 (1.04,2.53)* 1.16 (0.68, 1.95)

Association Between Issuance of Work Permits and Information on Child Labor Laws

	Adjusted OR	Unadjusted OR
• Work Permit Yes vs. No	2.67 (1.82,3.92) *	2.79 (2.12, 3.66)*
• Age 16-17 vs. <16 (when started working)	1.31 (0.94,1.82)	1.48 (1.07,2.04)*
• Gender (male vs. female)	0.90 (0.65,1.24)	0.74 (0.57-0.97)
• Race Black vs. White	1.76 (1.14,2.72)*	2.11 (1.48,3.01)*
Other vs. White	1.55 (0.94,2.55)	1.23 (0.79,1.93)
• Family bus. No vs. Yes	1.12 (0.67,1.89)	2.15 (1.36,3.39)
• Job type Service vs. Laborers	1.10 (0.74,1.66)	1.57 (1.12,2.20)
Cashiers vs. Laborers	1.52 (1.05,2.21)	2.46 (1.50,4.02)
Admin vs. Laborers	1.16 (0.60,2.26)	1.17 (0.58,2.36)
Manager. vs. Laborers	0.93 (0.48,1.80)	1.27 (0.83,1.94)

Association Between Issuance of Work Permits and Work in Construction

Age started working	Odds Ratio	Sign.	Alpha=0.05
<16	3.60 (1.55, 8.38)	Yes	
16-17	3.22 (1.01, 10.2)	Yes	

- For teens <16 years of age, those without work permits are 3.60 times more likely to work in construction than teens with work permits.
- For teens 16-17 years of age, those without work permits are 3.22 times more likely to work in construction than teens with work permits.

Unadjusted Associations Between Issuance of Work Permits and Performance of Illegal tasks

Dependent variable	OR	95% Confidence Limit	P value
Operating power tools or appliances	2.10	(1.54, 2.84)	< 0.0001
Used a power Slicer or Grinder	1.65	(1.09,2.51)	0.0085
Used a power Saw	3.55	(1.76,7.16)	0.0010
Used a baler or compactor	0.98	(0.52,1.82)	0.8289
Used a forklift	1.92	(1.01,3.64)	0.0106
Used power nail guns or staple guns	2.99	(2.04,4.39)	<0.0001
Operated heavy equipment	1.68	(0.86, 3.28)	0.0622
Worked in trenches >4 ft. deep	5.16	(2.17, 12.30)	0.0005

Work Hours of Working Teens by Age

		<16	16-17
• Work >18 hrs / week	1-4 wks/mo.	77.3 (50.0%)	176.8 (48.7%)
	Every wk /mo.	59.1 (27.9%)	102.2 (28.2%)
• Work most hours on a school day	<3hrs	39.3 (19.2%)	32.6 (9.2%)
	3-5 hrs	101.2 (49.5%)	201.7 (57.1%)
	>=6 hrs	56.6 (27.7%)	108.2 (30.6%)
• Work after 7pm (night before a school day)	1-4 nights	82.3 (38.3%)	208.9 (56.9%)
	>=5nights	29.7 (13.8%)	81.7 (22.2%)
• Work after 11pm (night before a school day)	1 night	19.8 (9.3%)	36.7 (10.0%)
	>=2nights	25.9 (12.1%)	48.1 (33.8%)
• Work >40 hrs / week	<1 wk /mo.	163.8 (55.0%)	286.1 (65.9%)
	>=3 wks/mo.	87.0 (29.2%)	72.1 (16.6%)
• Work >8 hrs on Sat. or Sunday	1-2 days /mo.	52.2 (18.0%)	95.7 (22.3%)
	>=3 days/mo.	132.0 (45.4%)	189.1 (44.1%)

Association Between Issuance of Work Permits and Work Hour Violations

Restriction	<16 years old when started working			16-17 years old when started working		
	chi-square	p-value	Sign. alpha=0.05	chi-square	p-value	Sign. alpha=0.05
Worked >18 hrs. per school week	7.91	0.10	borderline	8.06	0.09	borderline
Most hrs. worked on school day	8.09	0.04	Yes	4.63	0.21	No
Worked past 7pm on school night	2.97	0.56	No	10.16	0.04	Yes
Worked past 11pm on school night	7.65	0.11	No	1.70	0.80	No
Worked > 40 hrs. during non- school week	3.38	0.50	No	0.55	0.97	No
Worked >8 hrs. on weekend day	2.29	0.81	No	10.38	0.07	No

Discussion

- **Having a work permit is associated with greater teen self-report of receiving safety training and knowledge of child labor law restrictions**
- **Having work permits is not associated with work hour violations (no protective effect)**
- **Teens with work permits are less likely to perform a number of illegal hazardous tasks**
- **Teens with work permits are less likely to work in illegal occupations (construction industry and construction activities)**

Limitations

- **Self report by working teens.**
- **School based study. School-drop-outs not represented.**
- **NC work permit system is not representative of all states that have a work permit system.**
- **Surveys did not employ state wide random sampling procedures; results may not be generalizable.**

Conclusions

- Adequate screening and enforcement of work permits is lacking in North Carolina.
- Work permits are associated with increased knowledge of child labor laws and safety training.
- Work permits appear to have a protective effect on performance of illegal tasks but not on work hour violations.
- Interventions should target issuers of work permits as well as employers, youth, parents, and school officials.
- Interventions should target all young workers and specifically target teens who work for short duration as they are less likely to receive safety training, those who work in family owned businesses, and those who work in industries and jobs that are especially hazardous (unskilled labor). Interventions should address work hour restrictions.