

Despite Work Permits, Child Labor Violations Still Occur Among Young Workers

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Work permits appear to protect teen employees from performing illegal tasks, but not from work hour violations, according to a new study led by a Duke University researcher.

The findings have policy implications for many other states that mandate [work](#) permits, and demonstrate the need for stricter enforcement policies and improvements in work permit screening processes, the study concluded.

Researchers gathered data from a 2005 school-based survey of working teenagers in 16 randomly selected high schools within North Carolina. The sample included a total of 844 eligible working students.

Researchers found that work permits had no protective effect with regard to working late on school nights, nor did they have an impact with regard to violations of daily and weekly work hours when school was in session. The results of the study will be published in the April 2010 issue of the “[American Journal of Public Health](#).”

“Work permits have a protective effect with regard to selected illegal hazardous tasks among youth younger than 18,” said lead author Janet Abboud Dal Santo, research scientist at the Transdisciplinary Prevention Research Center at Duke’s Center for Child and Family Policy.

“However, our findings suggest that current screening processes do not

adequately determine whether young people are working in legal occupations and not exceeding the standards of daily and weekly hours or working late hours on school nights.”

The study authors, including J. Michael Bowling of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Tom Harris of the North Carolina Employee Association, also emphasize that violations may occur when employers switch young workers from a legal job to an illegal one.

In response to their findings, the study authors recommend that the North Carolina Department of Labor enforce a new North Carolina law that increases penalties for child labor violations. They also recommend increased education and public awareness efforts to help increase compliance; improved training of permit issuers, employers and young workers; and distribution of better educational materials through the permit issuance process.

“Screening for work hour restrictions in the work permit system is a logical next step for increasing work hour compliance,” Dal Santo said. “Despite limitations, work permits appear to have some effects on protecting teens from several prohibited tasks and occupations. Other than listing restrictions, work permit applications could also be improved by distribution of better educational materials through the permit issuance process.”

Provided by Duke University

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