

Report of BC Student Voice on Young Worker Health and Safety

Executive Summary

This report is presented to the Workers' Compensation Board of BC following a series of forums conducted by BC Student Voice, the youth-driven group of the BC Principals' and Vice-Principals' Association. It presents results of student-led discussions about the attitudes and opinions of youth about young worker health and safety. The first section of this report identifies the challenges facing young worker safety, and the second discusses the role of each stakeholder group in increasing young worker safety on the job.

In 11 forums held across the province, 450 students discussed the key health and safety issues facing young workers. They cited a lack of understanding and knowledge about workplace safety, a lack of proper training and safety procedures, inexperience, working conditions for youth and expectations and requirements for young workers as being the main drivers of accidents in the workplace.

Some solutions suggested by forum participants are creating a program for teachers to incorporate workplace health and safety education into everyday classroom situations, creating universally accepted safety training for young workers and a mandatory training period. They suggested that the WCB should routinely inspect more workplaces, not just the high risk ones, to allow youth more contact with inspectors. They also thought more awareness promotion would help and suggested a poster campaign for schools and billboards.

Forum participants emphasized that stakeholder groups involved with young workers – employers, educators, parents, community groups and the WCB – each have a role to play in improving awareness of workplace health and safety. They noted that just putting more programs in the school system would not solve the problem. Each of the stakeholder groups need to increase communication with each other as well as with young workers and make workplace safety a top priority and top-of-mind issue. The main themes that emerged regarding stakeholder roles are communication, accountability and training.

Students are worried about young workers being taken advantage of by their bosses. They are eager to please; but, this sometimes puts them in compromising and risky situations.



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The youth said that the workplace health and safety program currently in schools is not well known to students, so a new program that will make a bigger impact is needed. They felt that work experience programs are effective in teaching students about safety in the workplace.

Students suggested that community and youth groups work to create awareness about workplace safety and inform young workers about their rights as well as publicize workplace problems in their region.

Students suggested that WCB needs to reexamine its approach to workplace safety programs. They suggested large multimedia campaigns should be created that can travel to all the schools in the province. They also suggested increasing the number and diversity of injured young workers who are speaking at schools.

Parents need to get involved with their children so that they are more aware of issues and activities that are occurring at their child's workplace and help their children be prepared physically and mentally for their jobs. Young workers themselves should be more responsible, for example being in good health and well rested for work.

The WCB intends to use this report and its resulting discussion to build industry and community awareness of and commitment to the issues, and to bring together groups of different stakeholders to focus on integrated young worker health and safety programs and initiatives across the province.

To review or download the full version of this report, visit our web site at <http://youngworker.healthandsafetycentre.org>