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# Safety-Gram

## for Young Workers in Health and Community Care

**If you are a young (15 to 24 years old) or new worker entering the health and community care field then this Safety-Gram is for you.**

Young workers are at a high risk for injury at work. According to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board there were 2,822 lost-time injuries in health and community care workplaces in Ontario among workers 15 to 24 years old between 1996 and June of 2002. That's almost 6% of all the lost-time claims in the sector during this period!

### There are a number of factors that may put young workers at greater risk for injury:

- They often try too hard to please.
- They are eager to perform well with little supervision.
- They often will not report unsafe conditions or events.
- They may be unfamiliar with the work.
- They may take risks.
- They may have had insufficient training.
- They may not recognize dangers.

If you are a young worker or a new worker to a position you must take care to protect yourself by following the safety information that your employer provides. The information that follows will help prepare you for a safe career.

## Be Aware

- All workers should be aware of the hazards that they may encounter in the workplace. In health and community care workplaces the main hazards include:
  - sprains and strains related to moving or assisting clients and patients
  - sprains and strains related to lifting furniture, equipment and other items
  - slipping and falling
  - patients or clients that are aggressive or violent
  - infections
  - chemicals such as cleaners and disinfectants
  - cuts and burns from sharp objects and hot materials
- Workers should also be aware of the steps they must take to protect themselves from the hazards they encounter. Sometimes the precautions that you need to take will be written in specific procedures. You should know where the written health and safety procedures are located so that you can refer to them.
- You should know what to do when something bad happens including what to do in an emergency, how to summon help and where to go for first aid.

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the Health Care Health and Safety Association of Ontario
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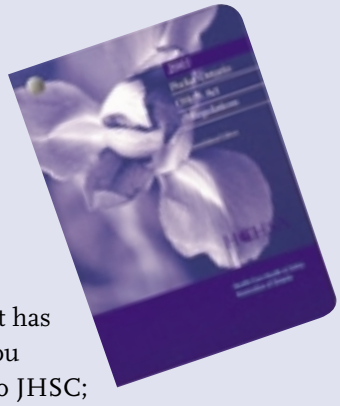
# Your Rights



In Ontario, the Occupational Health and Safety Act is one of the most important laws dealing with workplace health and safety. The Occupational Health and Safety Act gives every worker certain "rights" to help protect their health and safety. As a worker, you have the following rights under the Act:

### The Right to be Informed

- Every worker has a right to be told about specific hazards in their workplace.
- Every worker should be instructed about the safety precautions they need to take to protect themselves.
- If you have not been told about a hazard that you have a concern about, ask for information.

Employers are not obligated to disclose personal medical information about clients or patients unless it is related to the care you are providing. Instead, the employer may tell you about standard precautions to be taken in a wide variety of circumstances to protect you from many kinds of infections.

### The Right to Participate in Health and Safety

- Workers have a right to participate in the health and safety program at the workplace. This right is best seen in the form of a Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC) in the workplace that has both workers and managers working together to ensure that the workplace is safe.
- If you work in a place that has fewer than 20 workers, you might find that there is no JHSC; instead, there may be a worker who has been selected by other workers to be the Health and Safety Representative.
- You should make a point of finding out who the members of the JHSC are, or who the Health and Safety Representative is. These people are there to help you protect your own health and safety.
- Every worker can participate in health and safety by reporting potential hazards and following safe work practices.

### The right to refuse unsafe work

- In Ontario, many workers have a right to refuse work that may be dangerous. If you are being asked to perform a job that you feel is dangerous, the Occupational Health and Safety Act provides a way for you to exercise your right to refuse the unsafe work.
- You should be aware that in some jobs this right is limited if the risk that you are concerned about is considered an "inherent part of the job." For instance, a nurse cannot refuse to work with a person who has a blood borne disease like hepatitis if the nurse has been trained in proper precautions.

# Your employer or supervisor should tell you...

When you start a new job or if you change jobs in the same organization your employer or supervisor should:

- give you an orientation to the health and safety issues of your new position
- instruct you about the hazards you will encounter and how to protect yourself
- instruct you about what to do if there is an accident, an injury or an emergency at work

## Know Your Responsibilities

Every worker has responsibilities to help ensure that the place you work in is safe for everyone.

- You should be on the lookout for hazards at all times.
- If you see a hazard or have a concern about something related to health and safety you should speak to your supervisor.
- If you are injured or are involved in an accident at work you must report this to your supervisor so that it can be followed up properly.
- You also have a responsibility to follow the policies and procedures where you work. These may include safe work procedures that are designed to protect your safety!

## Know where to go if you have a concern

Most workplaces have a variety of places you can go for information about health and safety.

- Your supervisor - your first contact when you have a concern is your supervisor or, when the supervisor is not available, a person who has been delegated as being responsible.
- The JHSC - a member of the Joint Health and Safety Committee or your Health and Safety Representative is a good resource for information about health and safety.
- Information - posted in your workplace, possibly at a specific health and safety board, you should be able to find a copy of the Occupational Health and Safety Act, as well as other important health and safety documents.

Make it a point to find out where you should go to find out about health and safety. It is in your best interest, after all.

## Wear the Gear

Personal protective equipment such as safety footwear, safety glasses or gloves must be worn if they are required to protect your health and safety. When an employer identifies that certain protective clothing is necessary to protect workers, you must wear the items – this should not be considered an “optional” choice.

HCHSA
Health Care Health & Safety Association of Ontario

# Word Search

**Are you ready to work safely? Try this word search quiz.**

1. AWARE
2. EMPLOYER
3. HAZARD
4. HEALTH
5. INFORMATION
6. INJURY
7. JHSC
8. POSTED
9. REPORT
10. RESPONSIBILITIES
11. RIGHTS
12. SAFETY
13. SUPERVISOR
14. TRAINING
15. UNSAFE

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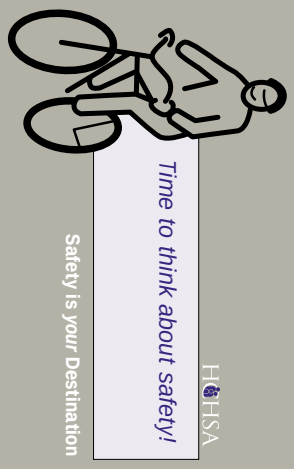
**Want more information about health and safety? Try these Internet sites:**

**Workplace Safety and Insurance Board:**
http://www.wsib.on.ca/wsib/wsibsite.nsf/public/homepage

**Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety:**
http://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/hsprograms/basic.html

**Workers Compensation Board of British Columbia -Young Workers:**
http://youngworker.healthandsafetycentre.org/s/Resources-YoungWorkers.asp

Young Worker: http://www.youngworker.ca/

**Canadian Occupational Health and Safety:**
http://www.canoshweb.org/en/young_workers.html

**North American Occupational Health and Safety:**
http://www.naosh.ca/english/young_safety.html