

CHAPTER 5: EMPLOYMENT & GETTING A JOB

Introduction: Getting a job, earning money, and finding out what you want to do as your career is an important part of growing up. This chapter gives you some basic information about the law and how it can help you to make sure you are getting work experience and an opportunity to explore your options for your future and your career.

Can I work and get job experience while I am in foster care?

- Yes! You should have the opportunity to work and gain job skills just like any youth or young adult.
- You can get informal experience through paid chores, taking odd jobs, volunteering, and internships.
- Gaining work skills, finding a job, and figuring out what jobs and careers you may like as an adult are part of the transition to adulthood services you should receive and that the court should be asking about at each permanency review hearing.¹
- The law also requires that youth in foster care have the opportunity to participate in activities and experiences that are age-appropriate.² Having the opportunity to get work experience and have a job are among the experiences all young people, including those in foster care, should have.
- The Children in Foster Care Act states that youth in foster care should have the opportunity to work and develop job skills at an age-appropriate level.³

How do I get a work permit if I am under age 18 and want to get a job?

- Anyone age 14-17 must have a work permit in order to be legally employed in Pennsylvania.⁴ Work permits are issued through the school district where you live.
- To obtain a work permit, contact your school's guidance counselor for an application or visit your school district's website. Your guidance counselor will review that application and issue your work permit.
- Your parent/legal guardian will have to sign the application in front of the school counselor. If your parents are unable to sign the application, your caseworker may be able to sign the form. Contact your caseworker and lawyer if you are having trouble finding someone to sign.

I want to learn a trade or get technical skills while in high school. What are my options?

- Pennsylvania has more than 80 career and technical education centers (CTCs) that offer public school-approved programs to students. You can graduate with your diploma and certifications in certain fields at these high schools. Training is offered in many areas, including computer programming, cosmetology, sports medicine, veterinary science, culinary arts, and heating and ventilation.

- Each school serves certain school districts, offers different programs, and has their own admissions requirements. Check out this comprehensive list of CTCs in Pennsylvania (linked in endnote) to find programs in your county.⁵
- Check out the Pennsylvania Department of Education’s Career and Technical Innovation website (linked in endnote) to learn more about CTCs.⁶

I am out of school. Where do I go for help finding a job or getting job training?

- Start by checking with your school district to see what options there are for training and for help getting a job. Some schools provide a lot of hands-on training and help with getting employment.
- You can also check out your local CareerLink Office.⁷ These offices are in most counties and can help individuals find jobs and get training. Ask if your local CareerLink Office has a Youth or Young Adult Programs.

What is the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR), what services do they offer, and how can I access them?

- OVR provides vocational rehabilitation services to help adults with disabilities prepare for, obtain, or maintain employment. Vocational rehabilitation services are services that help people deal with any barriers or challenges they are having to get or keep a job.
- OVR provides some services directly and contracts with other providers as well. There are OVR offices across the state. To find your nearest OVR office, visit the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry’s OVR Office Directory webpage.⁸
- OVR can directly provide or fund other agencies to provide an array of services. For OVR to provide or pay for the services, such services must be included in a vocational or service plan. Examples of training and services include:
 - Vocational exploration and training
 - Career and interest assessments
 - Trial-work experiences
 - On-the-job training
 - Job coaching
 - Supported employment
 - Career planning
 - Counseling, guidance, and referrals
 - Technology support (aids, devices, training)
 - Assistance with transportation to services or programs
 - College attendance
 - Medical and psychological diagnosis and treatment
 - Job placement
- Adults (age 18 and older) are eligible for OVR services.

- To get help applying for and accessing OVR services, talk to your lawyer or contact the **Client Assistance Program (CAP)**.⁹ They advocate for individuals who want to receive OVR services.
 - **If you want to get OVR services right when you turn 18, it's important to get set up with OVR before your 18th birthday.** You can receive OVR supports even if you are attending high school past age 18!

How is the court involved in making sure I am getting the opportunity to get a job and explore a career?

- Beginning at age 14, the judge in your case should ask you about your transition to adulthood skills and needs, what your goals are, and how you are getting help or services to meet those goals. This includes “job-readiness services” and an update on your “employment/career goals.”¹⁰
- The judge can order that actions be taken and services provided to help you deal with any problems or challenges you are facing or to get the help you need.
- If you are facing challenges with your job skills, a job, or exploring your career options, let your caseworker and lawyer know. Make sure you also tell the court. The court can order that an action be taken or a service be provided to you.

¹ See 237 PA. CODE § 1608(D)(1)(k)(vii) (2018) (for all youth age 14 and older, the court should make findings at each permanency review hearing about the job-readiness services that have been provided to the child and the employment/career goals that have been established).

² See 11 PA. STAT. § 2644(a) (2015).

³ See Children in Foster Care Act of 2010, 11 PA. STAT. § 2633(14) (2011).

⁴ See 43 PA. STAT. § 40.8 (2013) (duties of employer); 43 PA. STAT. § 40.9 (2013) (work permit).

⁵ A Comprehensive List of Career and Technical Education Centers in Pennsylvania, GOOGLE MAPS, <https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/1/viewer?mid=1La30REnkRewXhmDTkInc7wfZHaLgHpud&ll=40.56331018145515%2C-78.292852621875&z=7>.

⁶ PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, CAREER AND TECHNICAL INNOVATION, <https://www.education.pa.gov/K-12/Career%20and%20Technical%20Education/Pages/default.aspx>.

⁷ PENNSYLVANIA CAREERLINK, <https://www.pacareerlink.pa.gov/jponline/>.

⁸ PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRY, OVR OFFICE DIRECTORY, <https://www.dli.pa.gov/Individuals/Disability-Services/ovr/Pages/OVR-Office-Directory.aspx>.

⁹ PENNSYLVANIA CLIENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM, <https://www.equalemployment.org>.

¹⁰ 237 PA. CODE § 1608(D)(1)(k)(vii) (2018).