

TAKING ACTION



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Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Apply safety and child labor laws to real life situations
- List three ways to get information and help on health and safety problems
- Discuss several appropriate ways to approach supervisors about problems.

Time Needed: 50 Minutes

Materials Needed

- Flipchart and markers or chalkboard and chalk
- PowerPoint Slide #1 - *Handling Workplace Safety Problems*
PowerPoint Slide #2 - *Summing it Up*
- Handouts: *Are You a Working Teen* (A) (See the Know Your Rights module)
Chris's Story (B)
Role Play Solution Planning Sheet (C)

Preparing To Teach This Lesson

Before you present this lesson:

1. Obtain a flipchart and markers or use a chalkboard and chalk.
2. Locate PowerPoint slides #1 and #2 on your CD. Copy onto transparencies if needed.
3. Make extra copies of Handout (A), the handout used during the Know Your Rights unit, in case students haven't saved their copies.
4. Photocopy Handout (B) for your students.

Detailed Instructor's Notes

A. Introduction: Steps in problem solving (10 minutes)

1. **Introduce the topic.** Explain that the class will now learn and practice what to do when a safety problem comes up at work. They will also use some of the skills learned in earlier lessons, such as identifying hazards, controlling them to prevent injuries, understanding legal rights, and knowing where to go for help. It may be helpful to affirm to your students that young workers typically try hard to do a good job for employers. Unfortunately this can get students in trouble if the employer takes advantage of their willingness to do anything, even things that are not legal for them to do or for which they have not been correctly trained. Most employers won't purposely put students in danger, but there are far too many cases where employers allowed an eager young worker to do a task that was beyond his or her training. The results have been fatal. See the stories in Lesson 3 for examples.

2. First, ask students the following question:

Has anyone had any kind of problem at work, or a problem that someone you know has had, that you want to share with the class? It doesn't need to be a health and safety problem.

Then ask those who responded:

What steps did you or the person take to solve this problem?

Ask the whole class:

What other steps do you think someone with this problem could take?

As students answer, make a list on the board of the steps they mention. Although you will be listening to students' particular experiences when making this list, try to keep the steps you list general enough to apply to a range of possible problems.

3. PowerPoint Slide #1 shows some of the steps involved in solving workplace problems (both safety problems and other kinds). Discuss these steps with the class.

Slide #1

Handling Workplace Safety Problems

Steps in Problem Solving

- Define the problem
- Get advice from a parent, teacher or co-worker
- Choose your goals. Decide which solution is best.
- Know your rights
- Decide the best way to talk to the supervisor
- If necessary, contact an outside agency for help.



Note : You may want to wait to go over these steps until after students have had the opportunity to develop and demonstrate their own steps as part of the Chris role-play exercise.

- Define the problem or problems: Being able to describe the problem clearly is the first step toward solving it.
- Get advice from a parent, teacher, or co-worker: If there is a union at the workplace, the student may also want to ask them to help.
- Choose your goals: Students should think about what needs to happen to fix the problem; write down possible solutions.
- Know your rights: Students should become familiar with the hours they are allowed to work and the tasks that teens are not allowed to perform. Students should also become familiar with their safety rights.
- Decide the best way to talk to the supervisor: What should be discussed? Who should go along?
- If necessary, contact an outside agency for help: If the student continues to have trouble after talking to the supervisor, the student may need to call the appropriate government agency. If the problem is a workplace safety or health problem, contact OSHA or your state OSHA agency.

B. Role play: Chris's story (30 minutes)

1. Pass out copies of Student Handout (B) Chris's Story.
2. Ask for volunteers to play the roles of Chris, Mr. Johnson, and Dana. Have the volunteers come to the front of the class and read their parts aloud to the class.
3. Ask students what laws were violated in the story. Suggest they look at Handout (A) if necessary. As volunteers answer, write their responses on flipchart paper.

Possible answers include the following:

- Chris was not given information about the cleaning chemicals.
 - The employer didn't give Chris protective clothing (gloves).
 - No worker under 18 may use a meat slicer.
 - No one who is 14 or 15 may work that late on a school night.
 - Some students may interpret Mr. Johnson's comments as a threat to fire Chris if she won't stay and work. An employer may not threaten to fire someone because they won't do something illegal or unsafe.
4. Divide the class into groups of 3–6 students Use groups of mixed ages if possible.
 5. Explain that each group should come up with an alternate ending to Chris's Story, showing what Chris could have done about the health and safety problems. Assign each group one issue in the story to focus on (for example, working too late, working around chemicals, or using the meat slicer).
 6. Encourage groups to think about these questions:
How should Chris approach the supervisor about this problem?
What are the different ways the supervisor might respond?
Where else could Chris get help?

7. Groups may refer to Handout (A) if necessary. Explain to the students that they will be role-playing the alternate endings they've come up with; they should assign parts, decide roughly what each person will say, and take notes if necessary.
8. After about 15 minutes, bring the class back together.
9. Ask several of the groups (or all, if there is time) to act out their alternate endings to the Chris's Story skit.

Possible endings include the following:

- Chris asks a co-worker, friend, parent, or teacher for advice.
 - Chris tells the supervisor she is uncomfortable with the late hours and prohibited duties.
 - Chris asks a union or community organization for information on workers' rights.
 - Chris quits the job because of the long hours or other inappropriate requests.
 - Chris refuses to use the meat slicer because, by law, he/she is too young.
 - Chris files a complaint with OSHA or the labor law enforcement agency.
10. Ask the class to comment on how effective each group's ending is.

Questions to consider include the following:

How serious is the problem?

Is it urgent to get it corrected?

Will any of these approaches endanger Chris's job?

Which approaches will be most effective in solving the problem?

11. Review the problem-solving steps from Activity A, step 3 of this lesson.

C. Wrap-up and evaluation (10 minutes)

1. This lesson has focused on how to speak up effectively at work when there is a problem. It's important for students to know their rights, but it's also important for them to think through how they want to approach a supervisor with a problem. It's usually helpful to talk the situation over first with parents, teachers, co-workers, union representatives, or another trusted person—and then plan out the conversation. If necessary, there are agencies that can help you, like OSHA or the federal or state labor law enforcement agency.

Show PowerPoint slide #2.

Summing it Up

- Know your rights:
 - ◆ The factsheet is an important resource. Show it to your friends and parents.
- Know your responsibilities:
 - ◆ It's your responsibility to follow safety rules and to report any problems you see.
- Know your employer's responsibilities:
 - ◆ Your employer must keep the workplace safe and give you safety training.
- Know how to solve problems:
 - ◆ Resources include co-workers, friends, parents, teachers, and government agencies like OSHA, and state labor law enforcement agencies.

Remember:

- Know your rights.
- Know your responsibilities.
- Know that your employer has a legal responsibility to keep your workplace safe.
- Know how to solve problems as they arise.

Encourage students to ask their employers about the procedures for bringing up problems they run into at work—before the problems occur. If you are responsible for placing students in jobs, this may be a topic you want to raise with employers.

Remind students that their employers have a responsibility to provide them with a safe workplace and to give them specific training about hazards on their job.

CHRIS'S STORY

Scene: Sandwich shop. Chris is a 15-year-old high school student.

Mr. Johnson is her supervisor, and Dana is one of Chris's co-workers. It is Thursday evening.

Mr. Johnson: Chris, Andre just called in sick so I need you to work extra hours. I'd like you to stay until 10 tonight.

Chris: But Mr. Johnson, I have a test tomorrow and I need to get home to study.

Mr. Johnson: I'm really sorry, but this is an emergency. If you want to work here you have to be willing to pitch in when we need you.

Chris: But I've never done Andre's job before.

Mr. Johnson: Here's what I want you to do. First, go behind the counter and take sandwich orders for a while. Ask Dana to show you how to use the meat slicer. Then, when it gets quiet, go mop the floor in the supply closet. Some of the cleaning supplies have spilled and it's a real mess.

Later: Chris gets the mop and goes to the supply closet.

Chris: Hey, Dana! Do you know what this stuff spilled on the floor is?

Dana: No idea. Just be careful not to get it on your hands. You really should wear gloves if you can find any. Andre got a rash from that stuff last week.

Developing Your Role Play

1. Discuss with the class what laws are being violated here.
2. Work in your small group to come up with a different ending to the story. Choose one problem in the story to focus on. Think about these three questions:
How and when should Chris approach the supervisor about these problems?
What are the different ways the supervisor might respond?
Where else can Chris get help?
3. Practice role-playing your ending with your group. You will perform for the class later.

Role Play Solution Planning Sheet

Directions:

Work in your small group to come up with a different ending to the story. Your group will be role-playing your alternate story ending. Assign parts to your group members. Decide what each person will say, and write it down on the back of this worksheet.

Step 1:

Choose one problem in the story to focus on.

1. What is the problem your group will be focusing on? (Note: your teacher may assign your group the problem to focus on.)

Step 2:

To better help you plan what to say, think about these questions before writing out your solution to the skit:

1. What laws were being violated in this scenario? _____

2. How and when should Chris approach the supervisor about the problem? _____

3. What are the different ways Chris's supervisor might respond? _____

4. Where else can Chris get help? _____

Step 3:

Use the back of this worksheet to decide what each character will say and write out the dialog for your characters. Use this as your script for the role-play.

