

Policies & Procedures

Subject Area

Volunteer Activities

Topic

Youth on Site

Policy

Habitat for Humanity requires that no one under the age of 16 be allowed on a construction site while construction is going on and that no one under the age of 18 be allowed to do any of the ultra hazardous activities. Under 16 exceptions are noted below.

Accountability

Construction Coordinator and all Habitat volunteers

Purpose

It is important to be aware of the child labor laws that have been enacted by the Federal government and each state. These laws were originally put in place to protect children from oppressive working conditions and practices. However, over the years most states have come to view child labor laws as primarily safety regulations. Therefore, most states would likely apply these laws to volunteers as well as paid employees. Moreover, if a child were hurt and sued Habitat for negligence, the courts would likely look to the applicable child labor laws to determine if we acted reasonably by allowing the child to work.

Definitions

Children between the ages of 16 and 17 may perform general construction work, but may not engage in certain activities that are considered ultra hazardous. These include the use of power tools, motor vehicles, demolition, roofing and excavation operations.

Procedures

You should also make sure that there is always adequate supervision and training for any children working with your group. You may want to establish certain ratios, such as one adult for every three or four teenagers on the construction site.

Exceptions for under 16: If you do have 14 and 15 year olds painting or landscaping a Habitat house, you should schedule these groups for days when there is no active construction going on at the site.

There are many other ways that children under the age of 16 can be directly involved with the work of Habitat for Humanity without actually being on the work site during

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construction. For example, children can do clean up work or paint baseboards or door frames off-site before they are put into the house. Children can build mailboxes or flower boxes for a house or plant flowers around the new home. They can also help with cleaning a house before the homeowners move in. Children can provide food for volunteers; help with house dedications; baby-sit for volunteers or partner families so they can complete their sweat equity hours. With proper supervision, many of these activities can involve children even younger than age 14.