

Work Experience and Career Exploration Program (WECEP)

Program Description

Purpose

The program is designed to provide a carefully planned work experience and career exploration program for 14- and 15-year-old youth who can benefit from a career oriented educational program designed especially to meet the participants' needs, interests, and abilities. The program is aimed specifically at helping dropout prone youth to become reoriented and motivated toward education and to prepare for the world of work.

Background

Educators expressed concern for those students who develop a feeling of frustration or failure in academic achievement and wait for their 16th birthdays to occur in order that they may quit school. In this connection, educators in several states, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division and the Office of Education, U.S. Department of Health Education and Welfare, developed a program which would permit youngsters 14 and 15 years of age to explore career possibilities while they accumulate credits toward graduation. The program was developed in accordance with the concepts of action oriented research which was recommended by the workshop on research techniques conducted by the Office of Education for implementing the 1968 amendments to the Vocational Education Act. This vocational Education legislation was prompted by a vast amount of educational research which indicated that in order to help school alienated or disoriented youth see purpose and value in education it must include school supervised work experience and training and exposure to real jobs and careers as a vital core of the educational program.

Amended Child Labor Regulation Permits Student Participation

An amendment to Child Labor regulation 3, issued pursuant to the Fair Labor Standards Act and effective September 4, 1975, provides for necessary deviations from the child labor standards to permit enrollees to participate in a program approved by the Administrator of the Wage and Hour Division in cooperation with the office of Vocational and Adult Education. Enrollees in approved work experience and career exploration programs may be employed as many as 23 hours during any week when school is in session and as many as 3 hours on a school day. Any portion of this time may occur during school hours. (The maximum number of hours a person 14- or 15-years of age may be employed when school is *not* in session is 8 hours a day or 40 hours a week.)

Minors enrolled in an approved program may be employed in any occupation permitted to 14- and 15-year-olds under the child labor provisions of the Act and, additionally, in any occupation for which a variation has been obtained from the Administrator of the Wage and Hour Division. Under no circumstances may program enrollees be employed in mining or manufacturing occupations or occupations that have been declared hazardous for the employment of 16- and 17-year-olds or agricultural occupations declared hazardous for youngsters under age 16.

Requisites for Program Participation

Any State education agency that is interested in participating in the program may file a letter of application for approval of its particular program. The letter should be filed in duplicate with the original to the Administrator of the Wage and Hour Division, U.S. Department of Labor, and a copy of the Education Department, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, Division of State Programs Operation. The criteria used in consideration of applications are included in the amendment to Child Labor Regulation 3, effective September 4, 1975.

Students in the program should be 14- or 15-years of age and identified by local school personnel as able to benefit from the program.

Students should receive school credits for both in-school related instruction and on-the-job experience.

Each program should have a maximum of no more than 25 students per teacher/ coordinator.

Each program should be under the supervision of a teacher/coordinator who would generally supervise the program, and coordinate the work and education aspects of the program, and make regularly scheduled visits to the work stations.

There should be no participation in the program until a training agreement has been signed by the teacher/coordinator, the employer, and the student and approved by the student's parent(s). The

State educational agency or local educational agency should keep on file for 3 years a copy of the agreement for each student participating.

Students should be employed only in occupations which are permitted under Regulation 3 or for which a variation has been obtained.

Students should be paid the applicable minimum wage rate.

The names and addresses of each school enrolling WECEP students and the number of enrollees in each school shall be kept for 3 years at the State Education Office and made available for inspection by representatives of the Administrator of the Wage and Hour Division.

Any other provisions providing safeguards insuring that the employment will not interfere with the schooling of the minors or with their health and well-being may also be submitted.

WECEP Programs

The programs provide for a course of study and actual job experience. School classes include academic courses stipulated by State requirements for graduation as well as instruction in job-related and employability skill development with individualized or remedial instruction where needed. Credits toward graduation are awarded for both in-school related instruction and on-the-job work experience in accordance with the standards of the respective participating States. A part of the instruction is aimed toward development of safety concepts related to school, community, and employment; and toward development of desirable attitudes toward work.

Regularly scheduled classroom periods of instruction are devoted to job-related and employability skill instruction and time is allotted for classroom instruction in those subjects necessary for graduation under the State's standards. A maximum of 3 hours on a school day will be allowed at the work station. Work experience will be received on jobs permitted or approved under Federal or State laws and will be under the supervision of the teacher/coordinator and employer. The program has been constructed so as to provide students with an opportunity to advance academically as well as to grant them exposure to a wide range of career possibilities. Flexibility in the curriculum provides for entrances and exits. An enrollee will be able to pursue higher academic training; will be able to go into a vocational skill program; or will be better equipped for the world of work. The program's aim is toward development of vocational skill attitudes rather than training in a particular vocation.