

Credits

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About This Curriculum

Goals of the Curriculum

The goals of this curriculum are as follows:

- Raise students' awareness of workplace hazards that could cause injuries or illnesses.
- Equip students with prevention strategies that will protect them from injuries or illnesses in a variety of workplace settings.
- Raise students' awareness of their rights in the workplace and the laws and resources available to help maintain those rights.
- Encourage students to be active participants in creating safe and healthy work environments.

Intended Audience

The lessons in this curriculum target students in **grades 9-12**. With some adaptation, these lessons could also be used with a younger audience.

Key Components of the Curriculum

- The lessons were designed and developed to integrate into existing coursework in **social studies, health, agriculture, career exploration, and school-to-work**. This curriculum also could be taught as an interdisciplinary unit that combines several of these subject areas.
- This curriculum could be enhanced by combining it with field trips to a variety of workplace settings. These field trips could involve interviews with workers and evaluations of workplace hazards and safety measures.
- The lessons focus on **higher-order thinking skills**, such as **decision-making** and **evaluation**, as well as skills in **cooperative learning** and **oral communication**.

Lesson Format

This curriculum consists of **nine lessons of varying length**. Most lessons can be completed during a 50-minute time period. Some may require more time but can be extended over several class periods, if desired.

Lessons 1 through 5 explore the health-related issues of workplace hazards and their prevention. Each lesson deals with the following:

Lesson 1: Students are introduced to the issue of worker safety through a disability exercise and a discussion about workplace injuries and hazards.

Lesson 2: Students discuss the effect of potential workplace injuries on their lives, brainstorm a list of different types of workplace hazards, and then map out potential hazards in a work environment.

Lesson 3: Students brainstorm ways to apply the ABC prevention strategies to example hazards. They also discuss the reasons workers choose to take risks in the workplace, even when they know hazards are present.

Lesson 4: Students create a workplace safety plan for a simulated work environment, including developing a hazard map and safety action steps.

Lesson 5: Students present their workplace safety action plans for a simulated work environment, and unit content is briefly reviewed.

Lessons 6 through 9 explore the legal rights and communication skills related to addressing workplace safety issues. Each lesson deals with the following:

Lesson 6: Students are introduced to the importance of worker safety laws through a presentation of their history and by creating laws for simulated case studies.

Lesson 7: Students review current worker safety laws by playing a game and discussing some present-day scenarios.

Lesson 8: Students debate the benefits and limitations of worker safety laws and are taught the basic steps needed to address workplace safety issues.

Lesson 9: Students practice, through a role-play exercise, the basic skills needed to address workplace safety issues. They also identify unsafe situations at work or other places in which they could use these skills.

Each lesson includes the following components:

TEACHER TIP:

Photocopy all the unit fact sheets ahead of time and hand them out in a packet at the beginning of the unit. **Optional:** Make class copies rather than individual copies.



- **Fact:** Interesting fact that helps put a particular lesson into perspective.
- **Description:** Brief description of lesson activities.
- **Learner Outcomes:** Intended cognitive, attitudinal, and behavioral outcomes for the lesson.
- **Key Concepts:** Key ideas presented in the lesson.
- **Materials Needed:** Necessary materials for presenting the lesson, including handouts and overheads.
- **Preparation Needed:** Necessary steps to prepare for the lesson.
- **Directions:** Step-by-step instructions for completing the lesson, including a lesson script in bold type.
- **Taking It Home:** Homework assignments to be completed in preparation for the next class lesson.

Resources

A glossary and a list of educational resources on worker safety and health issues are included at the end of the curriculum.

As they were transferring the man, he became anxious and started flinging his arms in all directions. Maria lost her grip, and the man began to fall to the floor. She tried to grab him to break his fall. As she did, Maria felt a strain in her lower back. As she stood up, her back muscles began to spasm. Maria was sent home and went to a doctor for treatment.

Maria is now worried about the long-term effects of her injury. Maria enjoys dancing and had planned to become a dance teacher. She now worries that her back injury may prevent her from taking the advanced jazz dance lessons she'd need to become a teacher. Her back also gets sore if she sits too long, and sometimes, at night, she wakes up in pain.

Injuries and illnesses have a variety of causes and can occur in every type of workplace. As Joshua's and Maria's stories show, work-related injuries and illnesses can be permanently damaging — physically, emotionally, and financially.

The solution to the problem of workplace injuries and illnesses lies in prevention. Each of us can become more aware of health and safety issues in the workplace. By learning all we can about our responsibilities as employers and employees, we can help keep ourselves and our coworkers safe.

Evaluating the health and safety of our work environment is as important as doing quality work and getting paid well. Our health and the health of those we work with depend on it.



*Approximately
70 workers
under 18 die
every year.*



Why Teach Adolescents about Worker Safety?

Many students begin working at a regular job at the age of 14 or 15. Even before their first regular paying jobs, however, many students work for a neighbor or on a family farm. The number of adolescents working in the United States today is estimated to be approximately 4 million.³ A more meaningful number to you may be the number of responses you get when you ask your students, “How many of you work at either paid or unpaid jobs?”

The vast majority of your students have had or will soon have some work experience. Students who live on farms probably already have worked for years in a very hazardous work environment. Most students work at temporary or intermittent jobs that require little technical skill and likely provide little or no safety training.

Although laws are in place to protect adolescent workers, law enforcement alone cannot keep teens safe. As teachers, you are in a unique position to teach students about work safety, advocate for them in their current jobs, and prepare them for safe work experiences in the future.

Adolescent workers have about the same risk of being fatally injured at work as adult workers.⁴ Even though federal law prohibits people under

age 18 from working in the most hazardous professions, their injury rate is as high as that of adults.

Nationally, approximately 70 workers under 18 die every year as a result of work injuries. Each year, approximately 200,000 adolescents are injured at work and 64,000 are treated in emergency rooms.⁵ In other words, in a class of 20 teenagers, one or two students are likely to be injured at work this year.

Over two-thirds of 14- to 16-year-olds who are injured at work are limited in their normal activities for at least one day (with, for example, burned hands or strained backs). One-fourth are limited for a week or more (with, for example, broken arms or cuts requiring stitches). Most of these adolescents never received safety training on how to prevent the injury they suffered.⁶

But Don't Accidents Just Happen?

When someone is injured at work, people often say “accidents happen.” But do accidents just happen? If you were to review the events leading up to an injury, you would find that the injury likely could have been predicted and, therefore, prevented.

Work-related injuries are predictable, preventable events. This curriculum challenges students to work backwards from injury events to the hazards that caused them and then to the possible strategies that could have prevented the injury from occurring in the first place.

By proactively implementing prevention strategies, most, if not all, work-related injuries and illnesses can be prevented. Addressing potential worker safety issues **before** they occur is the best way to keep workers safe. Fixing the problem after an injury happens is often costly and results in unnecessary disability.

How Does Worker Safety Relate to Other Adolescent Health Issues?

As you read through this curriculum, you may notice similarities between decision-making skills used to deal with work-related injury or illness issues and other health-related issues, such as smoking, drug use, diet, and physical activity. Realizing the consequences of risk-taking behavior, recognizing the dangers to health, and learning ways to avoid or minimize these dangers are part of most health maintenance and disease prevention strategies.

In this curriculum, students use their own and other students' personal experiences to discuss the risks of work-related hazards and the best ways to prevent injury and illness from those hazards.

Injury prevention is complicated, because unhealthy or unsafe behaviors often happen in the context of socially positive goals, such as completing tasks on time, working quickly, or simply getting the job done. Although these goals are admirable and often necessary, a problem arises when they conflict with safety. These goals then become dangerous. Worker safety



Work-related injuries are predictable, preventable events.



Unit Framework

Key Concepts	Corresponding Learner Outcomes			Activities
	Cognitive	Attitudinal	Behavioral	
<p>Day 1: An Introduction To Worker Safety</p> <p>1. Worker safety is an important issue for all workers.</p> <p>2. Workers may become permanently impaired by workplace injuries or illnesses.</p> <p>3. A workplace hazard is anything at work that can harm a person — physically or mentally.</p>	<p>Students will:</p> <p>1. Define the term “workplace hazard.”</p> <p>2. Give examples of workplace injuries and illnesses.</p>	<p>Students will:</p> <p>1. Perceive that worker safety is an important issue for adolescents because many are working or soon will work.</p> <p>2. Perceive that workplace injuries or illnesses could affect them personally or those close to them.</p>	<p>Students will:</p> <p>1. Participate in daily activities while simulating a disability.</p>	<p>1. Experience “simulated” disabilities caused by workplace hazards.</p> <p>2. Discuss students’ experiences with workplace injuries or illnesses.</p>
<p>Day 2: Recognizing Workplace Hazards</p> <p>1. Workplace hazards can be divided into three categories: biological; chemical; and physical.</p> <p>2. Hazards may cause both temporary and permanent injuries and illnesses.</p> <p>3. Hazards may cause immediate injuries or illnesses. Other hazards may not cause injuries or illnesses until much later in life.</p>	<p>Students will:</p> <p>1. Identify the effects serious injuries or illnesses could have on their lives.</p> <p>2. Give examples of different types of workplace hazards.</p> <p>3. Recognize hazards in the workplace.</p>	<p>Students will:</p> <p>1. Perceive the importance of evaluating potential hazards in their workplaces.</p>	<p>Students will:</p> <p>1. Actively participate in class discussions of workplace hazards.</p> <p>2. Create hazard maps for simulated workplaces.</p>	<p>1. Discuss students’ experiences with simulated disabilities.</p> <p>2. Create hazard maps of different workplaces.</p> <p>3. Identify hazards associated with students’ experience with workplace injuries or illnesses.</p>

Unit Framework (continued)

Key Concepts	Corresponding Learner Outcomes			Activities
	Cognitive	Attitudinal	Behavioral	
<p>Day 3: Preventing Workplace Injuries and Illnesses</p> <p>1. Most workplace injuries and illnesses can be avoided by taking the right preventative steps.</p> <p>2. Three main ways to prevent workplace injuries and illnesses are Administration, Building barriers, and Communication.</p> <p>3. The best prevention strategies usually are engineering controls (part of Building barriers), because they don't depend on people making safe choices every time.</p>	<p>Students will:</p> <p>1. Describe three strategies used to prevent workplace injuries or illnesses.</p> <p>2. List examples within each prevention strategy.</p> <p>3. Identify the pros and cons of taking risks in the workplace.</p>	<p>Students will:</p> <p>1. Perceive that all workplace injuries or illnesses can be prevented.</p> <p>2. Identify the attitudes that help a person remain safe in the workplace.</p>	<p>Students will:</p> <p>1. List specific practices within each prevention strategy.</p> <p>2. Actively participate in class discussions about risk and its role in workplace safety.</p>	<p>1. Discuss the worker safety attitude survey.</p> <p>2. Review ABC prevention strategies.</p> <p>3. Discuss the concept of risk and its effect on personal safety in the workplace.</p>
<p>Day 4: Applying Prevention Strategies in the Workplace—Part I</p> <p>1. Each workplace has potential hazards that should be identified.</p> <p>2. Each person can take proactive steps to prevent injuries and illnesses in the workplace.</p> <p>3. Once prevention strategies are identified, they can be used to make the workplace safer.</p>	<p>Students will:</p> <p>1. Identify hazards within a workplace environment.</p> <p>2. Select appropriate prevention strategies for workplace hazards.</p> <p>3. Create a plan by prioritizing the order in which these prevention strategies will be implemented.</p>	<p>Students will:</p> <p>1. Demonstrate a positive problem-solving attitude toward workplace hazards.</p> <p>2. Perceive that they can personally take steps to make a workplace safer.</p>	<p>Students will:</p> <p>1. Create written prevention plans for simulated workplaces.</p>	<p>1. Cooperate in a group to identify the hazards and prevention strategies in a workplace.</p> <p>2. Create a plan to implement these prevention strategies.</p>

Unit Framework (continued)

Key Concepts	Corresponding Learner Outcomes			Activities
	Cognitive	Attitudinal	Behavioral	
<p>Day 5: Applying Prevention Strategies in the Workplace—Part II</p> <p>1. Each workplace has potential hazards that should be identified.</p> <p>2. Prevention strategies can make a workplace safer by reducing the possibility of injuries or illnesses.</p> <p>3. Employers must provide a safe workplace for employees. Workers should communicate any safety concerns to their employers.</p>	<p>Students will:</p> <p>1. Summarize their prevention plans in the form of presentations.</p> <p>2. Evaluate the plans presented by others.</p>	<p>Students will:</p> <p>1. Communicate safety information effectively.</p>	<p>Students will:</p> <p>1. Effectively communicate the rationale for the prevention strategies they selected.</p> <p>2. Evaluate their current work situations using the ABC's of prevention.</p>	<p>1. Cooperate in groups to complete their case studies and present their plans to the class.</p> <p>2. Review cards with key prevention steps.</p> <p>3. Review information learned up to this point.</p>
<p>Day 6: The Importance of Worker Safety Laws</p> <p>1. Before worker safety laws, working conditions for many young people were dangerous and unhealthy.</p> <p>2. Child labor laws were made to protect young workers.</p>	<p>Students will:</p> <p>1. Describe the state of worker safety before laws were enacted.</p> <p>2. Recognize the need for worker safety and child labor laws.</p>	<p>Students will:</p> <p>1. Perceive that worker safety laws are important in protecting the health of young workers.</p> <p>2. Perceive that everyone has a right to a safe workplace.</p>	<p>Students will:</p> <p>1. Actively participate in the new law development exercise.</p>	<p>1. Review photographs and stories of young workers.</p> <p>2. Develop laws that would protect these young workers.</p>

Unit Framework (continued)

Key Concepts	Corresponding Learner Outcomes			Activities
	Cognitive	Attitudinal	Behavioral	
<p>Day 7: Worker Safety Laws and You</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Every employer should follow worker safety laws. Worker safety laws are made to protect workers, not to limit their opportunities for employment. 	<p>Students will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Describe current worker safety laws. Apply these laws to specific work situations. 	<p>Students will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Perceive that workers have the right to expect a safe work environment. Perceive that employers have a right to expect employees to behave safely. 	<p>Students will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Stop any work practices that are illegal for them to perform. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Play a game to review worker safety laws. Read case studies of workplace safety situations and apply current laws to these situations.
<p>Day 8: Addressing Unsafe Workplace Conditions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Worker safety laws are meant to protect workers, not to limit their opportunities for employment. Each employee can take basic steps to address unsafe work conditions. Every worker has the right and responsibility to address safety concerns in the workplace. 	<p>Students will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Describe the benefits and drawbacks of worker safety laws. Give examples of helpful steps to resolve workplace safety issues. Apply these steps to a worker safety issue. 	<p>Students will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Perceive that worker safety laws are important, even though they may be restrictive. 	<p>Students will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss appropriate safety communication skills in different situations. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss the benefits and drawbacks of worker safety laws. Discuss the steps to take in addressing a workplace safety issue.

Unit Framework (continued)

Key Concepts	Corresponding Learner Outcomes			Activities
	Cognitive	Attitudinal	Behavioral	
<p>Day 9: Putting Work Safety Into Practice</p> <p>1. Every worker has the right and responsibility to address safety concerns in the workplace.</p> <p>2. An employer does not have the legal right to fire an employee, if the employee refuses to work in a situation in which danger is imminent.</p> <p>3. Employees can take basic steps to address unsafe work conditions</p> <p>4. Workplace safety can be achieved through cooperative problem-solving.</p>	<p>Students will:</p> <p>1. Describe steps to help resolve workplace safety issues.</p> <p>2. Apply these steps to real-life work situations.</p>	<p>Students will:</p> <p>1. Perceive the importance of addressing unsafe work issues with their employers.</p>	<p>Students will:</p> <p>1. Demonstrate the steps used in resolving workplace safety issues.</p> <p>2. Adopt safe and lawful practices at their workplaces or homes.</p>	<p>1. Role-play scenarios in which students must confront employers with worker safety issues.</p> <p>2. Discuss real-life workplace safety situations.</p>

Lesson Description and Preparation

Lesson Title	Lesson Description	Preparation Needed
1. An Introduction to Worker Safety	Students are introduced to the issue of worker safety through a disability exercise and a discussion of workplace injuries and hazards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send letter regarding disability exercise to parents and teachers, if desired. • Prepare disability materials (ear plugs, tape, face make-up, arm slings, crutches). • Make Overhead 1.1—one for each class period. • Photocopy handouts and sets of fact sheets. • Read through the hazard fact sheets.
2. Recognizing Workplace Hazards	Students discuss the effect of potential workplace injuries on their lives, brainstorm lists of different types of workplace hazards, and then map out potential hazards in work environments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Familiarize yourself with the example hazard maps. • Make Overheads 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, and 2.5. • Photocopy one handout.
3. Preventing Workplace Injuries and Illnesses	Students brainstorm ways to apply the ABC prevention strategies to example hazards. They also discuss the reasons workers choose to take risks in the workplace, even when they know hazards are present.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the fact sheets. • Review the attitude survey. • Think through the costs and benefits of different safety measures. • Use Overhead 1.1 completed in Lesson 1—one per class. • Photocopy handouts. • Make Overheads 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, and 3.5.
4. Applying Prevention Strategies in the Workplace—Part I	Students create workplace safety plans, including hazard maps and safety action steps, for simulated work environments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Photocopy workplace scenario descriptions and maps—one set for each group member assigned the scenario. • Photocopy the other two handouts. • Make sets of overheads of workplace maps—one set for each class. • Make Overhead 4.1.

Lesson Description and Preparation

Lesson Title	Lesson Description	Preparation Needed
5. Applying Prevention Strategies in the Workplace—Part II	Students present their workplace safety plans for simulated work environments. Content of the last five lessons also is reviewed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Photocopy one handout. • Laminate and cut out the game cards.
6. The Importance of Worker Safety Laws	Students are introduced to the importance of worker safety laws through a presentation of their history and a discussion of the rights of young workers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read through the child labor script a few times. • Review the photos. • Photocopy handouts.
7. Worker Safety Laws and You	Students review current worker safety laws by playing a game and discussing scenarios.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up the game show. • Photocopy two handouts.
8. Addressing Unsafe Workplace Conditions	Students discuss the benefits and drawbacks of worker safety laws and learn the basic steps for addressing workplace safety issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the list of benefits and drawbacks for each law. • Make Overheads 8.1 and 8.2. • Photocopy one handout.
9. Putting Work Safety into Practice	Students practice, through a role-play exercise, the basic skills needed to address workplace safety issues. They also identify barriers and solutions to overcoming challenges when addressing safety concerns in the workplace.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use Overhead 8.2. • Think through the S.A.F.E. steps in role-plays. • Think through possible responses by an employer. • Photocopy and cut out the role-play scenarios. • Photocopy handouts.