

Washington

Washington Updates Child Labor Rules

On May 19, 2026, Washington [updated](#) its agricultural and nonagricultural child labor rules to (among other things) implement three bills passed during the 2025 legislative session. The updated rules take effect **July 1, 2026**.

Background

To hire and employ anyone under the age of 18 in Washington, employers must follow specific laws and rules. Businesses that violate minor work restrictions can be subject to fines and civil penalties. Washington child labor laws are enforced by the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries (L&I).

Changes to Implement 2025 Bills

The updated rules make changes to implement the following bills passed during the 2025 legislative session:

- Substitute House Bill (HB) 1121 requires L&I to allow minors enrolled in career and technical education programs to work the same number of hours during the school year as during school vacations, so long as the work is performed for an employer approved by the educational program;
- Engrossed Substitute HB 1644 requires safety-and-health and child labor consultations for employers seeking certain child labor exceptions and increases consequences for failures to keep minor workers safe in agricultural and nonagricultural industries (information on penalties is provided below); and
- HB 1722 requires L&I to allow minors with certain licenses to work around bloodborne pathogens.

Under Revised Code of Washington [49.12.390](#), effective July 1, 2026, employers generally will be assessed a civil penalty as follows:

- No less than \$100 and no more than \$1,000 for each violation involving failure to obtain a minor work permit or parental or school authorization, for failure to maintain records or for each other nonserious violation;
- No less than \$150 and no more than \$1,000 for each violation involving failure to comply with hours of work requirements;

Highlights

May 19, 2026

Washington updated its child labor rules to (among other things) implement three bills passed during the 2025 legislative session.

July 1, 2026

The updated rules take effect.

- No less than \$300 and no more than \$1,000 for each violation involving failure to comply with meal break or rest break requirements;
- No less than \$1,000 for each violation involving failure to comply with prohibited duty requirements, variance conditions or minimum wage requirements for minors or for each other serious violation—except the civil penalty may be no less than \$2,000 for each violation in a second or subsequent citation for any of these violations identified in this bullet point;
- No less than \$15,000 for any violation resulting in the serious physical harm of a minor, which may be doubled where the violation is a willful violation or a repeated violation; and
- No less than \$71,000 for any violation resulting in the death of a minor, which may be doubled where the violation is a willful violation or a repeated violation.

For certain serious or repeated violations, employers may be subject to an additional civil penalty assessment. Also, beginning July 1, 2027, and every two years thereafter, the amounts above will be adjusted for inflation.

Additional Protections for Minors

The updated rules also strengthen protections for minors by establishing retaliation protections for agricultural and nonagricultural child labor. In addition, the nonagricultural rules improve alignment with federal prohibited duty standards, and the agricultural rules improve consistency with nonagricultural prohibited duties.

Other Changes

In addition to the changes above, the updated rules improve the organization and clarity of agricultural and nonagricultural child labor rules by:

- Creating a new chapter in the Washington Administrative Code (WAC) for agricultural child labor (Chapter 296-122 WAC) and consolidating sections with similar topics in the nonagricultural rules (Chapter 296-125 WAC);
- Improving the descriptions of minor work permits, parent/school authorizations and special variances to clarify L&I's existing practices and procedures; and
- Repealing duplicate and outdated standards.

Next Steps for Employers

Washington employers with minors should consider thoroughly reviewing the rules to ensure they comply with all applicable provisions. Employers needing additional assistance should contact local counsel for specific legal advice.
