

Employing 16- and 17-year-olds to work in child care

Key things to consider

As a licensed facility in the early learning and child care sector, it is important for programs to understand their responsibilities when hiring 16- and 17-year-olds to work as primary staff.

Supervision requirements

All 16- and 17-year-olds working as primary staff must be supervised at minimum by a Level 2 early childhood educator (ECE). The [Licensing Handbook for Facility-based Programs](#) contains a definition of supervision for these types of staff, which also applies to volunteers under the age of 18:

Supervision of primary staff members and volunteers under the age of 18 must be adequate to ensure the safety, well-being, and development of children. Supervision of staff will depend on the specific circumstances of the child-care environment and the needs of the staff or volunteer being supervised. However, supervision must be on the premises, and the supervisor must be in close proximity, available and able to intervene as needed.

Programs will have flexibility to adapt their supervision practice to the capabilities of the 16- or 17-year-old they are supervising but must remain focused on providing high quality care while complying with their approved program plan and adhering to the Act and Regulation.

16- and 17-year-olds are primary staff

16- and 17-year-olds who are employed as primary staff to work in ratio with children, will be considered equivalent to all other primary staff members, if they are under the supervision of a Level 2 ECE. Programs must consider this when hiring these staff members.

This also means that all other rules concerning primary staff members apply to 16- and 17-year-olds, such as the need for primary staff to receive Level 1 ECE certification within six months from the date of commencement with the program.

It is also recommended to check with parents and guardians of enrolled children to ensure they are comfortable with having 16- and 17- year-olds employed as primary staff in your centre.

Criminal Record Check and Vulnerable Sector Search

When hiring 16- and 17-year old staff to work as primary staff, the best practice for programs would be to complete a Criminal Record Check prior to employing these staff in a facility-based program.

Recognizing that those under 18 cannot apply for a Vulnerable Sector Search, this part of the background check will be delayed until the ECE's 18th birthday. After which point they will have **eight weeks** to complete a Vulnerable Sector Search, as well as a Criminal Record Check if they have not already completed one earlier.

Under the Regulation, any employee without a Criminal Record Check and Vulnerable Sector Search must remain supervised.

Employment rules

Employing 16- and 17-year-olds comes with certain rules, including the hours these employees can work. It is important for programs to know **all of the rules** that apply when hiring and employing 16- and 17-year-olds.

Programs can learn about some of their responsibilities here: [Alberta.ca/youth-employment-laws](https://alberta.ca/youth-employment-laws).