

Teens struggle to find jobs due to age, hours and state laws

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High school students are busy as they study for the SAT, plan for homecoming and prom, rehearse for plays and practice for their sports.

But most high school students also work part-time jobs or work to find a part-time job.

For many kids, their parents know someone who knows someone who works in the kitchen at a local restaurant and the teens get a job.

Others fill out applications at multiple local businesses until someone says "You're hired."

But there's a lot more to finding a job, and there are a good number of laws on state and national levels preventing teens from acquiring particular jobs.

In North Carolina a youth employment certificate is required for any teen to work under the age of 18, unless employed in government, agriculture or domestic work.

If a teen arrives for a job without the certificate, he/she won't get hired.

What the teens think

"Jobs are looking for 16 and up and that's the only reason I can't work," said 15-year-old Stephanie Higgs, a Franklinton High sophomore.

"I used to volunteer for Youngsville Elementary and I loved the atmosphere. I'm just looking for a decent job to have some money for Christmas, college savings, and just extra cash to take my mom out once in a while."

Ashleigh Duke, also of FHS and 15, in a similar spot as Higgs, wants a part-time job that isn't in a restaurant.

"I'm looking for a job that is fun but doesn't treat me



Terrance Mead, 16, a junior at Wakefield High, picks up application information from Texas Roadhouse representatives on Mon, Oct 1.

differently because I'm not over 18," Duke said. "I've had trouble finding a job because most of them require you to be 16 and I'm not. I think if I was, I would have a better chance at getting a job.

"I'm not sure why I don't want to work in a restaurant; I just don't," she said. "I'm good at drawing and very smart, but it's hard to find a decent job at 15. I mean I don't want a large amount (of money), just enough to where I don't have to run to mom and dad for money to get a piece of candy in the store. ... I just want a job that offers good pay for my age and has something to do with drawing or creating something."

Another problem is the hours teenagers may work.

"The problems I face are the employers working with the laws that restrict my working hours because of my age," said Brianne Campbell, also 15.

Because Campbell's parents are divorced, she splits her time with them, which also affects the times

she is available to work.

"What would help me get a job is if employers would be more willing to work with my restrictions," Campbell said. "I'm looking for a job that's willing to work me when I can work and something that's in the field of work I would like to pursue, like a pharmacist assistant."

Career guidance and age restrictions

Barbara Wiggins, Wakefield High School's Career Development Coordinator, said because of age restrictions, most teenagers work in service-oriented positions like movie theaters, roller skate rinks, the YMCA and restaurants.

Wiggins keeps a bulletin on the high school's web site alerting students to job openings in the area.

"I try and let them know what's out there," Wiggins said.

The basic minimum age for employment in N.C. is 16.

"Sixteen- and 17-year-olds may be employed in any occupation other than those declared hazardous or

detrimental," the law states.

"No youth under 18 who is enrolled in school, in grade 12 or lower, may be employed between 11 p.m. and 5 a.m. when there is school for the youth the next day. Sixteen- to 17-year-old youths may get the hour restriction waived upon written permission from the parent/guardian and from the youth's principal/designee.

"Young persons 14 and 15 years of age may be employed outside school hours in a variety of non-manufacturing and non-hazardous/non-detrimental jobs for limited periods of time and under specified conditions.

"Children under 14 years of age may not be employed in nonagricultural occupations. Permissible employment for such children is limited to work as actors or performers in motion pictures, theatrical, radio or television productions. Children may also perform work such as completing minor chores around private homes or casual baby-sitting."

Because of the tight age restrictions, Wiggins makes sure that when an employer contacts her to post a job, she has the specifics to offer her students.

"We have a lot of students who interact with children, lots of tutors," Wiggins said. "We've had good success with the posting because when I have a request, I ask them to be really specific so if they can hire 14-year-olds, I put that out there."

Wiggins said the Raleigh Parks and Rec Department keeps a list of positions available on its web site and often has jobs for 14-year-olds.

Shorter hours — not always

what the employer wants

Another obstacle teens face is the hours they are available to work.

The law states, outside school hours, 14- and 15-year-olds can work no more than three hours on a school day, including Friday, no more than 8 hours on a non-school day, no more than 18 hours during a week when school is in session, no more than 40 when school is out. In addition, teens can work between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. except between June 1 and Labor Day when the evening hour is extended to 9 p.m.

Teens 16 and under must be given at least a 30-minute break after five consecutive hours of work under the Wage Hour Act.

Fourteen- and 15-year-olds may work in most office jobs and retail and food service establishments, but may not work in processing, mining or in any workroom or workplace where goods are manufactured or processed.

They may work in food preparation but may not perform any baking activities and may only perform cooking that involves the use of electric or gas grills that do not entail cooking over an open flame and deep fat fryers that are equipped with and utilize devices that automatically lower and raise the baskets into and out of the oil or grease. They can bag groceries, perform office work, stock shelves and cashier.

Fourteen- and 15-year-olds may not operate most power-driven machinery including lawn mowers, lawn trimmers and weed-cutters. They may operate most office machines and certain equipment found in food service places like dishwashers, toasters, dumbwaiters, popcorn poppers, milkshake blenders and coffee grinders.

Even more restrictions for restaurants

Any employer who holds an on-premises ABC permit for the sale or consumption of alcoholic beverages is not allowed under N.C. law to hire anyone under 16 for any position.

But teens at least 14 years of age can work on the outside grounds of the business with written consent from a parent or guardian as long as the teen is not involved with the preparation, serving, dispensing or sale of alcoholic beverages. Parent or guardian signature on a work permit is acceptable as written consent.

The same business cannot hire teens under 18 to prepare, serve, dispense or sell any alcoholic beverages, including beer, wine, and mixed beverages.

Jobs you can't have if 18 and under

Teens cannot work jobs with manufacturing or storing explosives, using a motor vehicle or work as an outside helper on motor vehicles, coal mining, logging and sawmilling, power-driven woodworking machines, exposure to radioactive substances and ionizing radiation, power-driven hoisting apparatus, power-driven metal-forming, punching and shearing machines, power-driven paper products' machines, manufacturing of brick, tile and related products, power-driven circular saws, band saws and guillotine shears, wrecking, demolition and ship-breaking operations, roofing operations, trenching and excavation operations.

Professional obstacles

"One of the main obstacles is as adults, we learn how to network and ID where our options are," Wiggins said. "Young people don't know

where to start, when you're just starting out.

"If we could teach them how to network with those around them. ...They need to set a goal, and state it to those around them and they'll help move you toward that goal.

"Young people aren't aware that that's how it works."

Wiggins brings local businesses to the school during the lunch hours, and students can apply or just talk to the employers.

spoken to someone whose son went in for an interview and was the only job candidate to call back a few days later and thank the company for the interview.

"He got the job. It's as simple as that," Wiggins said.

Wiggins said it's important for students to learn good eye contact, a strong handshake, and it's important to understand the company you're applying for and the skills you're presenting. The other key instrument in an interview is the resume.



Katie Mong, service manager for Texas Roadhouse restaurant, and Craig Capps, kitchen manager, set up shop Mon, Oct 1 at Wakefield High to inform students of upcoming job opportunities at their new location off Capital Boulevard.

"My job is to develop those relationships for our students," Wiggins said. "The main key is, as adults and community members, to educate our children about how to advocate for themselves and realize the responsibilities jobs give them.

"At 16 it's hard to recognize how much that speaks of their skill level. "We have to help them formulate those thoughts and ideas and state that goal and communicate to others the abilities they have and that will get them hired."

Wiggins said she had just

"I understand students' frustrations," Wiggins said.

Spreading the wealth of her knowledge

Though Wiggins is the Wakefield High career coordinator, she is also busy trying to implement the same programs for Franklin County students.

"Franklinton High kids may be struggling to get jobs, but their opportunities are great because all they have to do is drive down U.S.1. But the key to getting a job is presentation," Wiggins said.

The Franklinton Business Alliance was set up a few

years ago to take seniors on industry tours and mock interviews.

The tours and interviews are set up through senior English classes and is all-voluntary.

"It was recognized the kids were struggling and the alliance has spoken about doing career fairs out there," Wiggins said.

"There are real strong advocates out there like Progress Energy and Embarq, SunTrust Bank and Curves in Franklinton.

"There's an awareness that there's a need for that sort of preparation," Wiggins said. At Wakefield High, Wiggins sets up Friday Fairs where hundreds of professional organizations set up booths at the school and meet with students.

"Students have to have readiness to gather this information. By doing this so regularly, they do peer mentoring, and it teaches

them that community, that networking that we help each other and together we can get a little further."

Franklinton Business Alliance

The Business Alliance will again assist Franklinton High with its senior project this year, which will include resume-writing, mock interviews and business tours.

The Franklinton Alliance is in its third year of operation and the majority of the alliance members are Franklinton natives or graduates.

"It's very much hometown helping hometown," said alliance member and Franklinton native Darin Wilder.

"As any organization is getting started, we're trying to find our niche and we have," Wilder said.

The alliance assists the school with open house showcases, homecoming and manpower for report card

pickup. They also provide guest speakers to classes as needed.

The alliance also started the mentoring program for at-risk students.

Wilder said the alliance started planning a few years ago how to implement a career education program.

"The first few years we did job shadowing, business tours, trying to get a format laid down that something would have a purpose behind why you were doing it. So we started this three-step process with senior classes through English classes, where teachers help students with writing resumes and while they're doing that, we schedule mock interviews and bring in business professionals, owners and recruiters from the county and surrounding area, and for two days we just have the classes come in and dress the part, present the interview, etc. They go through and

interview for entry-level positions.

"When the interview is complete, the interviewer grades them and critiques them.

"To complement this, we take students out to a local business and give them a tour. We used to gear it toward their interests; however, when you have a larger class size, we tell them to go with an open mind because just because you know you want to do X, see what Y is doing; go in with an open mind.

"Always something learned just by experiencing something outside of your goal. That's something we try to stress with all of them."

Wilder said the program has worked well and that the school, thanks to its principal Charles Fuller and career counselor Kelly Cramer, is working on implementing the senior project for all grade levels.

Making the connection

- For jobs or internship opportunities with Raleigh Parks and Recreation, visit www.raleigh-nc.org.

- To obtain a youth employment certificate:

1. Go to the N.C. Department of Labor web site at www.nclabor.com, and click on "Youth Work Permit."

2. Follow the directions to submit the required information for a youth employment certificate.

3. After the information is submitted, the approved permit will be displayed on the screen.

4. Print out the certificate and have it signed by the youth, parent or guardian, and employer.

5. Give completed certificate to the employer to maintain on file.

If you have any questions about the youth employment certificate, contact the NCDOL Wage and Hour Bureau at 807-2796 or toll-free at 1-800-NC-LABOR (625-2267).

You can also apply for an employment certificate in person at

Wake Forest-Rolesville High School, 420 W. Stadium Drive, Wake Forest. 554-8611.

- Violators of the child labor provisions may be subject to a civil money penalty of up to \$11,000 for each minor employed in violation.

- For more information on child labor laws, call 807-2796 (Raleigh) or toll-free (N.C. only) 1-800-NCLABOR (1-800-625-2267), or visit the Department of Labor web site: www.nclabor.com

For federal information, call 790-2741. You may also call toll-free 1-866-4-USWAGE (1-866-487-9243) or visit the United States Department of Labor Web site: www.dol.gov/esa/whd or www.youthrules.dol.gov.

- For resume help, there are a multitude of web sites, like monster.com and careerbuilder.com, which also contain job banks.

The employment security commission also has helpful

resources at www.ncsc.com.

- There are also job link centers that will serve all students in Franklinton and Wake counties.

[Franklinton and Wake County students can use F4K.org. Just go in and click on your school and make your own account.](#)

- For teens looking for jobs, the fifth annual Great Xplorations Career Fair (formerly known as the Triangle Town Center Career Fair) will be held on Nov. 2 at the Jane S. McKimmon Center from 9 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

Over 2,500 eighth-, ninth-, and 10th-grade students are expected to participate this year.

About a hundred businesses and organizations will set up display tables and talk to students about careers in their business or organization.

For more information, contact Will Heard with Closure Medical at 876-7800.