



# What to expect from the proposed changes to the law in relation to child employment

**LAWYERS  
WITHOUT  
BORDERS**  
*Crossing Borders  
to Make a Difference*



**LABOUR DEPARTMENT**

## Key Changes and Definitions:

Children may be employed full-time after they have completed compulsory education (that is ordinarily around the age of 16/17 years).

Compulsory education means that all children must remain in school until they have completed primary and secondary school, whether high school or a technical school.

### 3 Key additions to the law:

1. **Light work** means work that,

- (a) may be performed by a child who is 13 years of age or older;
- (b) is not likely to be harmful to a child's physical health, mental health, safety, moral or general welfare or development;
- (c) does not prejudice the child's school attendance or participation in training and vocational programs, or the child's capacity to benefit from such instruction;
- (d) is not performed between the hours of 6 pm and 6 am; and
- (e) does not exceed-
  - i) if the child is 13 years of age, 1 hour on a school day or 2 hours on a non-school day and in any case not exceed 7 hours per week; or
  - ii) If the child is between 14 and 16 years of age, but has not completed compulsory education, 2 hours on a school day or 6 hours on a non-school day and in any case not exceed 28 hours per week, except during school vacation period.

2. **Hazardous work** means, work which is likely to harm the health, safety, morals or education of a child, including but not limited to —

- (a) work which exposes a child to physical, psychological, or sexual abuse;
- (b) work that is performed underground, under water, at dangerous heights, or in confined spaces;
- (c) work with dangerous machinery, equipment, and tools, or which involves the manual handling or transport of heavy loads;
- (d) work in an unhealthy environment, which may expose a child to dangerous substances, agents, or processes, or to temperatures, noise levels, or vibrations damaging to their health;
- (e) work under particularly difficult conditions such as work for long hours or between the hours of 6 pm and 6 am, or work where the child is unreasonably confined to the premises of the employer;
- (f) work that exceeds two hours on a school day or six hours on a non-school day, and in any case exceeds twenty-eight hours per week except, during school vacation periods or where the child has completed compulsory education; and

*Under certain circumstances, a young person i.e. a child that is 16 or 17 years of age may perform work listed on the hazardous work list if the work is identified as a hazard that can be mitigated and adequate training, supervision and safety measures are provided, as necessary.*

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3. **Worst forms of child labour** means,

- (a) all forms of slavery and similar practices including trafficking, bonded labour, or compulsory labour;
- (b) using, procuring, or offering a child for prostitution, producing pornography or similar practices;
- (c) work that is likely to harm the health, safety, morals or education of a child; or
- (d) using, procuring, or offering a child for illicit activities including –
  - (i) the production or trafficking of drugs;
  - (ii) gang activity;
  - (iii) trafficking of firearms or ammunition; or
  - (iv) importation and handling of contraband.



### Frequently Asked Questions:

**Q:** What is the difference between a child and a young person?

**A:** A child is any person under the age of 18, a young person is a child who is 16 or 17 years of age.

**Q:** At what age can a child begin part-time work/employment?

**A:** At age 13 light work for no more than 7 hours per week

At age 14 to 15 light work for no more than 28 hours per week.

At age 16 to 17, the child may perform some work listed on the hazardous work list,

- for no more than 28 hours per week, and
- with adequate training, supervision and safety equipment.

**Q:** What is the difference between child work/employment and child labour?

**A:** Child work/employment is work/employment that IS NOT prohibited by law. Child labour is work/employment that IS prohibited by law. Child labour is illegal.

**Q:** Why should I hire a child, if it is so burdensome?

**A:** Some jobs may be better suited for children. Children may be more available for part-time work. Hiring children may be a way to invest in your future workforce.

**Q:** What if I employ a child do work that is prohibited?

**A:** There will be a penalty under the law, in the first instance there may be a warning.

### Frequently Asked Questions:

**Q:** What if I employ a child to work for more hours than permitted?

**A:** There will be a penalty under the law. In the first instance there may be a warning.

**Q:** What if I hire a child without a contract of service?

**A:** There will be a penalty under the law, in the first instance there may be a warning

**Q:** Would my child be allowed to work with me in the family business (family undertaking)?

**A:** Yes under the same conditions that apply for work/employment of children. There will be a definition for family undertaking.

**Q:** If the law does not specifically include my type of work, from whom can I get clarification?

**A:** Any Ministry of Labour office, the Ministry of Labour's website, and Facebook page.

**Q:** What if a child has completed compulsory education before turning 18 and wishes to get a job?

**A:** The child may be allowed to work full time only with the permission of the Labour Department.

**Q:** What should I do if I know of a child who is doing work that is prohibited?

**A:** Contact the nearest Labour Department or Human Services Department.

### Labour Department:

Corozal Free Zone—403-7447

Corozal Town—402-2179

Orange Walk Town—302-3425

San Pedro—226—3009

Cayo—804-2287

Dangriga—502-2102

Independence—503-2173

Punta Gorda—702-2724

#### BELMOPAN

Cor#29 Raccoon Avenue &  
#6129 Brown Street  
City of Belmopan, Belize C.A.

Tel: 802-2663

Fax: 822-1275

#### BELIZE CITY

P.O. Box 103  
5 Albert Street West  
Belize City, Belize C.A.

Tel: 207-4023/4027

Fax: 227-4031