



# Your Advantage

*News and information to help you and your business succeed*

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## Employer Advantage announces

Kathryn Watkins, Payroll Department Head and LeAnn Tomlin, Employer Advantage Controller, attended the HRPyramid User Conference and Training April 28-May 1, 2009. The annual conference is billed as the "premier learning event" for HRPyramid users to learn about ongoing developments and advancements as well as how the products integrate with other software.

The Employer Advantage team of "EA Walking 4A Cure" raised over \$600 for the MS Walk in Joplin on April 25. The event had 126 registrations and raised \$21,858.64 to date. (Donations and pledges are still being taken and paid through May 22, 2009) Members of the EA Walking 4A Cure are: Debbie Cash, Accounting, Cameron Cash, (Debbie's son), Greg Francis, Loss Prevention, Jennifer Harlan, Payroll/IT, Evonne Jacobs, Benefits, Christina Tripp, Marketing, and Susan Whitlock, Risk Management.

## Workplace Preparedness in Pandemic Situations

With the announcement that H1N1 (Swine Flu) has been detected in multiple countries worldwide and many states in the United States, proactive businesses are asking themselves if they are ready, if a widespread outbreak is declared.

The website <http://www.pandemicflu.gov> has checklists for businesses and families to assist in the planning to be ready if a pandemic occurs. Some of the recommendations for businesses include:

- Establishment of policies for sick leave absences and employee compensation unique to a pandemic.
- Establishment of policies for return to work for previously ill employees.
- Review and consideration of flexible worksites and/or flexible work schedules.
- Establish policies on restricting travel to affected domestic and international areas affected by widespread outbreaks of influenza.
- Remind employees of good health habits and cough etiquette.

The best way to avoid seasonal flu is to get vaccinated each year. To help avoid special flu outbreaks, encourage your employees to:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When employees are sick, they need to keep their distance from others to protect them from getting sick too.
- Stay home from work, school, and errands when they are sick. That may help prevent others from catching their illness.
- Cover their mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. It may prevent those around the employee from getting sick.
- Wash their hands often with soap and water or hand sanitizer. Especially after they cough, sneeze or wipe a nose.
- Avoid touching their mouth, eye or nose after touching something that is contaminated (or could be contaminated) with germs.
- Live a healthy lifestyle. Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food.

The Human Resource Professionals and Loss Prevention Specialists at Employer Advantage can assist you with the review and editing of pandemic policies and procedures.

# Why I Need a Vacation

**Caution:** *Don't read the next part if you have a co-worker going on vacation next week. It will make you jealous of her.*

Vacation. For many people, that word conjures up white sands, a beach chair, and lots of sun screen. Or maybe the dream is mountain peaks, cool mornings and hot coffee with majestic views.

Whatever scene the word "vacation" brings to your mind, you may find yourself brushing it aside and thinking about the economy, downsizing, and all the work you have to do now that your company is leaner. On the website about.com (www.about.com), a poll is being conducted about vacations. At this time, 27% of respondents say that they take vacations several times a year, 23% take vacations once a year, 12% take vacations once every one – two years, and 36% say that they take them less frequently than every two years – or – never.

You might argue that your company would be in better shape if people never took time off for vacations, but you would be in the minority. Vacations can help with:

- **Burnout.** Workers who take time away from work on a regular basis tend to experience less burnout and are more productive than their overworked peers.
- **Health.** Many companies are promoting wellness programs and encouraging employees to "become healthy". Just by taking time off on a regular basis, employees can reduce stress, relax and stay physically healthier.
- **Happiness.** Even though everyone has a vacation story about lost reservations, a broken down car, or food poisoning, vacationing with our loved ones makes us happier and strengthens our families. Employees with good family support are the ones that succeed when times are stressful.
- **Job Performance.** Who hasn't come back from vacation "charged up" and ready to go? Vacations not only give a respite from the daily responsibilities of jobs, but also can spur creativity and refresh ambition.

It is important to note that a "vacation" does not include taking your blackberry, laptop, or the unfinished employee handbook. Vacations should be a time when most, if not all, of your duties are delegated to someone else to handle for the time period you are away.

If you can't swing a trip to the beach this year, try a few days off to take day trips to local attractions, or a stay-at-home vacation with sleeping late, catching up on books and movies, or just playing with your kids. The important thing is to rest, relax, and recharge.

*As for that co-worker going on vacation next week, she'll be jealous of me in July.*

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## Spring Cleaning

This year, make your office spring cleaning include any files, stacks, or "squirreled away" old forms and new hire packets. Some forms, such as the I-9 Employment Verification Form, Federal W-4 and W-5 forms have expiration dates and have been replaced by new forms. In addition, Employer Advantage periodically updates client forms for better communication or additional information needs.

### **Some forms to discard and replace:**

- **I-9 Employment Verification Form** – The current form has a "Rev. 02/02/09" in the lower right hand corner. All other blank forms need to be discarded and only the new ones used. Use of the old form is considered a paperwork error and can result in a fine of \$100-\$1000 per out-of-date I-9. (Current employees who have completed an I-9 do NOT need to complete a new one.)
- **W-4 or W-5**- Federal withholding forms (W-4) should have the W-4 2009 at the top. The 2009 W-5 Earned Income Credit Advance Payment Certificate will also have 2009 at the top.
- **Employer Advantage New Hire Packets** – If you check your New Hire Packet stock and find old I-9s or W-4s in the packet, discard the packet and ask Employer Advantage for a new supply. This will ensure that you have the most up-to-date forms possible.

As new forms are issued, Employer Advantage will make them available on the web as well as sending new copies to client locations. Clients who wish to replace their existing forms or new hire packets need to check the web or contact Employer Advantage Payroll Specialists or Human Resources Representatives. If you don't have web access at this time and want to have access to reports, payroll and forms at your convenience, contact your Payroll Specialist.

# Employment for Minors

## Summer Time is Coming.

As summer approaches, many companies hire youth under 18 as temporary summer employees. This not only helps the employer, but also helps the teenagers learn about work skills and gain hands-on experiences. Employers need to be aware of the limitations that Federal and State laws place on these employees.

Generally, federal regulations provide that minors between 14 and 15 years old may work in the following jobs: office/clerical work, cashier, kitchen work (with some restrictions), clean up work inside and outside, and packing and shelving orders. Hours that a minor may work are listed below and on the mandatory federal Minimum Wage Poster. Many states also require a state child labor law poster. Please check with Employer Advantage if you have questions about your state and the poster requirements.

### UNDER FEDERAL LAW

Minors under the age of 16 may work:	Hours per Day	Hours Per Week	Between the Hours of
While School is in session	3	18	7am - 7 pm
When School is not in Session	8	40	7 am - 9 pm

Teen workers who are 16 and 17 years old do not have the federal restriction on their hours of employment, but do have rules prohibiting hazardous jobs.

### Employees who are 16 and 17 years old are prohibited from working:

- In plants or establishments manufacturing or storing explosives or articles containing explosive components, including ammunition, black powder, blasting caps, fireworks, high explosives, primers, and smokeless powder.
- As a motor vehicle driver or helper.
- In mining.
- In logging, sawmill, lath mill, shingle mill, or cooperage mill operations.
- With power-driven woodworking machines, circular saws, band saws or guillotine shears.
- With power-driven hoisting apparatuses, including operating or assisting to operate certain elevators, cranes, derricks, hoists, riggers, or high-lift trucks.
- With power-driven metal forming, punching, or shearing machines.
- With bakery machines or power-driven meat processing machines or involving slaughtering, meat packing, or processing or rendering.
- With paper-products machines, scrap paper balers, and paper box compactors.
- In roofing or excavating.
- In wrecking, demolition or shipbreaking operations.
- In manufacture of brick, tile or similar products.

Federal and state laws closely regulate the employment of minors by placing restrictions on employment. An employer may be subject to criminal penalties, civil liability, and penalties under workers' compensation statutes if a minor is injured while working illegally.

While hiring minors is an excellent way to supplement the summertime workforce needs and give the up-and-coming workforce a chance to start working, employers need to be aware of hour, duties, and safety restrictions in order to be compliant and keep teens safe in the workforce.