

## Teenagers in the Workplace

Many believe that part time jobs are a great way to teach responsibility to teenagers. Through employment young people learn time management, the value of money, how to work as a team, and how to follow directions. While all of this may be true, there are also some concerns that should be addressed in relation to teenage employees. They include:

- Part time work is the first time many teen-agers come into consistent contact with adults outside of their family or an educational setting. Employers and coworkers have a significant influence on a teen's decision to remain drug-free.
- According to the Department of Labor, the majority of working minors are employed by industries where alcohol and other drug abuse rates are disproportionately high.
- Construction workers, sales personnel, and restaurant employees reported the highest rate of illegal drug usage. Restaurant employees were also among occupations with the heaviest alcohol usage.

The primary purpose of the employer is to get the job done. However, addressing workplace influences on young employees can create a safer and healthier work atmosphere and, hence, a more productive work environment. Consider the following:

- A study by Dr. Kenn Pidd of the National Center for Education and Training on Addiction (NCETA) revealed that the pressure to belong to a group and to be socially accepted by coworkers is one of the primary reasons young workers indulge in work-related alcohol and other drug use.
- Federal and state laws already encourage employers to work with supervisors and experienced workers to develop an injury and illness prevention program and to help identify and solve safety and health problems of young employees, so why not expand the scope of health and safety to include alcohol and other drug prevention?
- Though most employers have a drug-free workplace policy, *employee awareness* is also an essential component to a drug-free workplace. Dr. Pidd's study revealed that the level of adolescent drug and alcohol use was somewhat lower in workplaces where the workers were made aware there was a drug policy in place.