



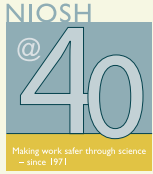
Racial differences in supervision among teens injured at work

Erin C Welsh, University of Louisville
erin.welsh@louisville.edu

Teresa J McGeeney (University of Louisville); Kristina M Zierold, PhD (University of Louisville)

Background and Objective: Although labor force participation by teens has declined over the last fifteen years, nearly 80% of teenagers work at some point during high school. Due to their inexperience and lack of skill, teens are at increased risk for occupational injury, with minorities possibly being at highest risk. The role of the supervisor in workplace injury occurrence among teen workers has not yet been studied. Quantity and quality of supervision as well as differences in supervision by race could influence the frequency and outcome of workplace injury in teens. **Methods:** This study utilizes mix-methods techniques. Initially teenagers aged 15-19 were recruited from two large public high schools in Jefferson County, KY during spring 2010 to participate in focus groups and interviews. In total, five focus groups and seven interviews were conducted, involving 42 teenagers. Following the qualitative part of the study, a questionnaire was administered to over 2,700 students within the high schools. The schools were chosen based on diversity of the students and variety of job training opportunities. **Results:** White teens reported more injury than African American teens in our sample (56% W vs. 32% AA). When asked whose fault the injury was, more white teens showed self-blame (80% W vs. 69% AA). Supervision was more common in white teens. Eighty-three percent of white teens talked to their supervisor at least several times a week, compared to 72% of African Americans. While supervision was more common in white teens, 22% of white teens said they would do something they felt was dangerous if their supervisor asked them to, compared to 9% of African American teens. **Conclusion:** In this population, injury was more prevalent in white than in African American teens. Qualities of supervision differed as well. Although white teens were more communicative with their supervisor, they were more likely to perform a task they felt was dangerous if their supervisor asked them to. Furthermore white teens were more likely to blame themselves for their injury. Supervision alone does not seem protective against injury and is perceived differently by white and African American teens. The relationship between supervisor and teen may explain behavioral differences. For example, perceiving a supervisor as a friend could lead to different behaviors than perceiving a supervisor as a boss. Further analysis of recently collected data will help to explain racial differences and the role of supervision in injury.

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Chicago, Illinois • September 14–15, 2011