



CO-OP PLACEMENT: SUPERVISOR GUIDELINES AND CHECKLIST



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PURPOSE

The purpose of this guideline is to support workplace supervisors in providing a safe, positive, and meaningful experience for students during their work placements. Supervisors play a critical role in ensuring the health and safety of student workers, not only by fostering a respectful and supportive environment but also by fulfilling legal responsibilities under the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA).

This resource is designed to help supervisors understand their obligations, recognize and control potential hazards, and implement effective safety measures. By following the guidance provided, supervisors will be equipped to protect student workers, ensure compliance with legislation, and contribute to a culture of safety in their organization. When supervisors actively engage in health and safety practices, they help students develop strong safety habits, build confidence, and set an example for others, creating safer workplaces for everyone.

THE ROLE OF THE WORKPLACE STUDENT SUPERVISOR

As a workplace supervisor, you play a vital role in supporting co-op students throughout their placement experience. You are the key connection between your organization and the school, ensuring that students learn in a safe, respectful, and productive environment. Your guidance helps students build confidence, understand workplace expectations, and maximize the benefits of their work placement.

Under Ontario's **Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA)**, co-op students are legally considered **workers**. The Act defines a "worker" as:

Any of the following, but does not include an inmate of a correctional institution or like institution or facility who participates inside the institution or facility in a work project or rehabilitation program:

1. A person who performs work or supplies services for monetary compensation.
2. A secondary school student who performs work or supplies services for no monetary compensation under a work experience program authorized by the school board that operates the school in which the student is enrolled.

This means that co-op students are entitled to the same protections as paid employees under OHSA, and workplace supervisors have legal responsibilities to ensure their safety.

Under Section 28 of Ontario's Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA), workers, including co-op students, are required to:

Comply with the Act and its regulations.

Use or wear any equipment, protective devices, or clothing required by the employer.

Report to your employer or supervisor any missing or defective equipment or protective device that could endanger anyone.

Report any contravention of the Act or regulations, or any workplace hazard you are aware of.

Ontario's Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA), supervisors, including those overseeing student placements, must fulfill specific legal duties:

As a supervisor under [OHSA s.27](#), you are required to:

- Ensure students work safely and use required protective equipment and procedures.
- Advise students of any potential or actual dangers to their health and safety.
- Provide written instructions on protective measures and procedures, where prescribed.
- Take every reasonable precaution for the protection of students.



In practice, workplace supervisors fulfill these duties by:

- Regularly checking in with students and monitoring their work.
- Helping students understand workplace expectations and safety protocols.
- Ensuring students are aware of potential hazards and how to respond safely.
- Staying involved and informed to help students build safe work habits that will benefit them throughout their careers.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR STUDENT SAFETY DURING CO-OP PLACEMENT?

Health and safety are a shared responsibility among the student, workplace supervisor, school staff, and employer. The workplace supervisor is legally responsible for ensuring the safety of all workers, including students, under Section 27 of Ontario's Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA). In addition, the school, whether it is the teacher, principal, or accompanying staff also has a duty to ensure that the student is placed in a safe environment and receives appropriate support throughout their placement. [Under Ontario Regulation 298 \(Operation of Schools – General\)](#), teachers are required to “ensure that all reasonable safety procedures are carried out in courses and activities for which the teacher is responsible” and to “perform duties assigned by the principal in relation to co-operative placements of pupils.” These provisions reinforce the obligation of school staff to actively monitor and support student safety during experiential learning.

Students with Special Needs

- If a student has special needs or is unable to understand their rights and responsibilities as a worker, **additional support and accommodations must be provided.**
- The workplace supervisor must take every reasonable precaution to protect the student, including adapting training and supervision to the student's abilities.
- The school staff accompanying the student (such as an Educational Assistant or Teacher) should be fully informed of all workplace hazards, controls, emergency procedures, and reporting protocols. (*Refer to Supporting Student Safety: Co-op Teacher's Guide for responsibilities of the School staff*)
- If the student cannot understand safety instructions, **the supervisor must ensure that the accompanying school staff is given all necessary information and training.**
- The school staff may act as an intermediary, helping the student follow safety procedures and advocating for their wellbeing.
- The supervisor should confirm that the school staff understands:
 - All workplace hazards and controls
 - Emergency procedures
 - How and to whom to report hazards or incidents
 - The student's rights, including the right to refuse unsafe work
 - PPE requirements and proper use

Legal Compliance



- The workplace supervisor must comply with OHSA and any relevant accommodation legislation (e.g., Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act).
- The school is responsible for ensuring the placement is appropriate and that the student receives the necessary support.

HOW WORKPLACE SUPERVISORS CAN BEST SUPPORT CO-OP STUDENTS

Workplace supervisors can play a key role in ensuring a safe and successful co-op placement by taking the following actions:

- Ensure students receive a thorough orientation on workplace expectations, safety procedures, and hazard awareness.
- Review the student's placement details and confirm that your organization has an active health and safety program.
- Ensure all required documentation (such as the Work Education Agreement) is complete and up to date.
- Teach students about the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) and their rights as young workers.
- Discuss potential hazards students may encounter in their specific placement.
- Explain how to report workplace hazards and encourage open communication.
- Serve as a point of contact for students who have concerns or questions about their placement.
- Advocate for students' wellbeing and intervene if a placement is unsafe or inappropriate.
- Maintain regular communication with both the student and the school's placement coordinator.
- Conduct check-ins or site visits to ensure the student is safe, supported, and learning effectively.
- Keep records of student placements, safety training, and any incidents or concerns that arise.
- Ensure that students complete any required training, forms, or evaluations related to health and safety.

CONDUCTING AN INITIAL WORKPLACE INSPECTION

Supervisors must conduct a thorough initial inspection of all areas where a student may be assigned work. (Refer to [supporting student safety: Co-op teacher's guide](#))

No workplace is entirely free of hazards, so every work area, including offices, storage rooms, service zones, and maintenance areas must be assessed for potential risks.

The purpose of this inspection is to:

- Ensure the site is safe and appropriate for student placement.
- Confirm the workplace has an operational health and safety program.
- Identify and document actual or potential hazards in the environment or work procedures.
- Determine if any hazards require immediate attention, training, or protective measures.
- Confirm that staff at the placement site are available and competent to provide safety training.
- Evaluate whether existing safety policies, procedures, and controls are adequate to protect student health and safety. (Re-evaluations should be conducted annually. Consider also re-



evaluating after significant change, near misses, incidents, audit findings or changes in student needs)

- Ensure that students receive accurate safety information before they begin their placement.
- Ensure that the student’s orientation will include hazard recognition and current controls.

The number and timing of inspections during the placement should be based on the level of risk in the workplace. After the initial inspection, supervisors should evaluate risks and prioritize hazards based on the severity of potential consequences. Additionally, supervisors must verify that students have received a health and safety orientation that includes hazard recognition and controls. This ensures students are aware of workplace risks and understand the measures in place to protect them.

See Appendix A for a Sample Workplace Inspection

ASSESSING RISK

Assessing risk is a crucial step in maintaining a safe work environment and protecting students during their placement. Once a hazard has been identified, it’s essential to assess the level of risk it poses to prioritize corrective actions. This involves determining how workers might be harmed, estimating the likelihood of the hazard causing injury or illness, and evaluating the potential severity of the outcome.

Risk is typically assessed by considering both probability and severity.

Probability assesses the likelihood of harm occurring, considering factors such as the nature and frequency of exposure, the number of workers affected, and historical data on similar incidents.

Severity refers to the seriousness of the consequences, ranging from minor injuries to permanent disability or fatality.

For example, a high-risk hazard is very likely to cause serious harm and should be addressed immediately; lower-risk hazards, on the other hand, may require less urgent controls or monitoring. By systematically assessing risk, supervisors can make informed decisions that help prevent incidents and ensure a safer placement experience for students.

See Appendix B for a sample Risk Matrix Guide.

		PROBABILITY OF INJURY		
		High	Medium	Low
SEVERITY OF INJURY	Major	High	High	Medium
	Moderate	High	Medium	Low
	Minor	Medium	Low	Low

*Severity x Likelihood =
Risk Rating and Priority*

ORIENTATION & TRAINING

Before a co-op student begins work, supervisors must ensure that a comprehensive health and safety orientation is provided to a co-op student. This orientation is essential to ensure the student understands workplace expectations, recognizes potential hazards, and knows how to protect themselves and others.

Key elements to include in orientation and training:

- **Hazard Recognition & Controls:** Explain all workplace hazards the student may encounter and the control measures in place to keep them safe.
- **Emergency Procedures:** Review emergency protocols, including evacuation routes, location of emergency equipment, and who to contact in an emergency.
- **Reporting Protocols:** Clearly outline how and to whom students should report hazards, incidents, or concerns.
- **Required Safety Training:** Confirm the student has received all necessary safety training, such as WHMIS (for chemicals), PPE use, violence and harassment policies, and safe equipment operation.
- **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):** Ensure the student knows what PPE is required, where it is located, and that it fits properly. Train them on correct use and care of PPE.
- **Equipment & Materials:** Provide hands-on training for any equipment or materials the student will use, ensuring they understand safe operating procedures.
- **Three Basic Rights of Workers:**
 - **Right to Know:** Students must be informed about hazards, including training on chemicals, machinery, equipment, and processes.
 - **Right to Participate:** Encourage students to identify and help resolve health and safety concerns.
 - **Right to Refuse Unsafe Work:** Inform students of their right to refuse work they believe is dangerous to themselves or others.
- **Legal Responsibilities:** Remind students that everyone in the workplace, including students, supervisors, and employers must follow the laws set out in Ontario's Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA).
- **Student Responsibilities (OHSA Section 28):**
 - Work according to the Act and applicable regulations
 - Use and/or wear required equipment or protective devices.
 - Report missing or defective equipment or protective devices.
 - Report any potential or actual hazards.
 - Always work safely.

See Appendix C for a sample Student Training & Orientation Checklist

RESOURCES

Having access to relevant and reliable health and safety resources is a crucial part of maintaining a safe workplace. These resources can help you better understand your rights, recognize potential hazards, and know what steps to take in various situations. Whether you're learning about proper protective equipment, emergency procedures, or workplace rights, being informed empowers you to make safer choices. Below is a list of additional resources that may support your health and safety needs as you enter the workforce.



Hazard Category	Resources
Safety Hazards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hazard Management Tool • Workplace Inspection Checklist • Personal Fall Protection Equipment Checklist • Ladder Safety Fast Facts • Ladder Inspection Checklist • Machine Guarding Checklist • Student Safety in the Technical Shops Webinar • Student Safety in Technological Education E-Learning
Chemical Hazards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WHMIS Pictograms • WHMIS Fast Facts • Home - ACGIH
Biological Hazards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infection Prevention and Control: Basic Awareness Training
MSD Hazards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MSD Fast Facts • How much can you lift? • 5 Steps for MSD Prevention Webinar • Risk Factors Associated with Material Handling Injuries
Psychological Hazards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workplace Wellbeing Webinar Series • ResilientME e-learning • Chronic Mental Stress and Resilience - Key Concepts and Actions for Employers • Workplace Harassment eLearning
Physical Hazards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heat Stress Awareness Guide • Extreme Heat - Ontario.ca • Guide to the Noise Regulation under the OHSA

ADDITIONAL EXTERNAL RESOURCES:

- [Ontario Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development](#)
- [WSIB Ontario](#)
- [Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety: Young Workers](#)
- [The Ontario Curriculum Grades 11 and 12: Cooperative Education](#)

SOURCES

1. [Personal protective equipment fit requirements | ontario.ca](#)
2. [Occupational Health and Safety Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. O.1 | ontario.ca](#)
3. [CCOHS: Personal Protective Equipment](#)



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4. [CCOHS: Tips for Young Workers](#)
5. [CCOHS: Emergency Planning](#)
6. [Ontario Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development](#)
7. [WSIB Ontario](#)
8. [Education Act, R.S.O. 1990, c.E.2](#)
9. [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act](#)



APPENDIX A: SAMPLE WORKPLACE SAFETY CHECKLIST

Person completing the checklist:	
Date:	Signature:

GENERAL - Workplace Safety	Y/N	Corrective Action
Are the floors clear of debris, loose materials, worn carpet, etc?		
Are emergency exits clearly marked and unobstructed?		
Are fire extinguishers, first aid kits, and emergency equipment accessible and maintained?		
Are materials neatly and safely stored?		
Is there clear signage for hazards?		
Supervision & Training	Y/N	Corrective Action
Will the student be adequately supervised by a trained staff member?		
Is there a clear orientation or onboarding process for students?		
Will safety procedures and emergency protocols be communicated to students?		
Equipment & Tools	Y/N	Corrective Action
Are tools and machines in good working order and properly maintained?		
Are safety guards and emergency shutoffs in place and functional?		



Will students be trained before using the equipment?		
Ergonomics & Physical Demands	Y/N	Corrective Action
Are tasks appropriate for the student's physical abilities?		
Are there risks of repetitive strain, heavy lifting, or awkward postures?		
Are mechanical aids or proper lifting techniques used?		
Emergency Preparedness	Y/N	Corrective Action
Are emergency procedures posted and reviewed?		
Are evacuation routes and muster points identified or communicated?		
Are staff trained in first aid or emergency response?		
Hazardous Substances	Y/N	Corrective Action
Are hazardous substances properly stored and labelled?		
Are safety data sheets available for each product?		
Are WHMIS symbols and Safety Data Sheets (SDS) available and accessible?		
Are students expected to handle chemicals, and if so, will they receive proper training?		
Personal Protective Equipment	Y/N	Corrective Action
Will the student be provided with the appropriate P.P.E?		



Will the student be trained on the proper use of the P.P.E?		
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APPENDIX B: SAMPLE RISK MATRIX

It's important to recognize that assessing health and safety risks often involves a degree of subjectivity.

Step 1: Determine Probability

Probability determines the likelihood of the hazard causing injury or illness. Estimate the probability of injury by considering the nature of exposure, the time spent exposed, the number of workers exposed and how often they are exposed.

Step 2: Determine Severity

Severity describes how serious the injury or illness could be using a scale of major, moderate or minor.

		PROBABILITY OF INJURY		
		High	Medium	Low
SEVERITY OF INJURY	Major	High	High	Medium
	Moderate	High	Medium	Low
	Minor	Medium	Low	Low

SEVERITY RATING	
Major	The hazard could cause fatal or serious injury/illness and/or damage resulting in permanent or long term disability and/or significant loss
Moderate	The hazard could cause injury, illness and/or property damage resulting in lost time.
Minor	The hazard could only cause minor injury or illness without lost time or other loss

PROBABILITY RATING	
High	Injury or illness due to exposure to this hazard is very likely
Medium	There is a chance that the hazard will cause injury or illness
Low	The hazard will probably not cause injury or illness

Step 3: Risk Rating and Priority

Plot the probability and severity of injury on the risk priority chart to determine if the risk is high, medium or low.

		PROBABILITY OF INJURY		
		High	Medium	Low
SEVERITY OF INJURY	Major	High	High	Medium
	Moderate	High	Medium	Low
	Minor	Medium	Low	Low



SAMPLE CO-OP STUDENT ORIENTATION & TRAINING CHECKLIST

Workplace Supervisor Name:	Signature:
Student Name:	Signature:
Placement Location:	Start Date:
Student's School:	School Address:
Co-op Teacher:	Phone Number:
Emergency Contact:	Emergency Contact Number:

Orientation Topics	Completed	Comments
Provided comprehensive health and safety orientation before student began work		
Explained all workplace hazards and control measures		
Reviewed emergency procedures (evacuation routes, emergency contacts, equipment locations)		
Explained how and to whom to report hazards, incidents, or concerns		
Confirmed completion of required safety training (WHMIS, PPE, violence & harassment, equipment use)		



Reviewed organization's health and safety program and policies		
Discussed violence and harassment policies and reporting procedures		
Provided hands-on training for equipment and materials student will use		
Ensured student knows what PPE is required, where it is located, and that it fits properly		
Trained student on correct use and care of PPE		
Worker Rights	Completed	Comments
Informed student of their three basic rights <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Right to Know (about hazards) • Right to Participate (in safety) • Right to Refuse Unsafe Work 		
Student's legal responsibilities under OHS Act Section 28	Completed	Comments
Work according to the Act and regulations		
Use/wear required equipment or protective devices		
Report missing/defective equipment or protective devices		
Report potential or actual hazards		
Always work safely		
Confirmation of Understanding	Completed	Comments
Student demonstrated understanding of safety procedures and protocols		



Student completed all required forms and evaluations		
Report missing/defective equipment or protective devices		