



Safety Guidelines and Considerations for Youth in Research Laboratories

Scope

This guideline covers high school/ undergraduate project and Internship/placement students

Introduction

Gaining valuable experience in the laboratory environment is increasingly becoming an integral part of learning for students in high school and undergraduate studies. It allows students to observe and learn laboratory methods and procedures which will prepare them for future studies and research opportunities as they progress through their education.

Young workers, students and volunteers (“youth”) are much more likely to be injured on the job yet they are often very eager to learn and can bring novel ideas and approaches to your lab.

However, they often can’t recognize health and safety hazards and may hesitate to ask questions. These guidelines have been prepared by the Office of Environmental Health and Safety to assist both youth and lab supervisors in making the experience rewarding and safe.

Legal Requirements

The Ontario Occupational Health and Safety Act sets out the rights and duties of all employees at the University. It establishes procedures for dealing with workplace hazards and the University ensures that all lab work sites are in compliance with the law. The University’s Health and Safety Policy provides a framework for students and volunteers. Please note that a student or volunteer must be at least 15 years old in order to assist with or conduct research in the laboratory.

If a young person will be working in the lab, supervisors must:

- Ensure that youth in labs perform their jobs as prescribed by law, using the equipment and protective devices that are required.
- Explain actual and potential, general and job-specific, workplace hazards. This instruction can be through formal training or informal instruction; however in all cases it must be documented.
- Provide written measures and procedures for their protection.
- Encourage all youth to alert their supervisors immediately if they see something that endangers their safety, or the safety of others.
- Arrange for experienced lab personnel to coach new and young lab workers.
- Ensure that youth are supervised at all times.
- Periodically take young workers on health and safety inspections to check for hazards and unsafe work practices in the lab where they are working.



- Encourage new and young workers to come forward with ideas and suggestions.
- Some labs may have particularly hazardous materials such as bioagents, dangerous chemicals, lasers, radiation, please contact the Office of EHS for guidance.

For further information or questions related to these guidelines, contact the Office of Environmental Health and Safety at ehs.office@utoronto.ca.