

## When Times Are Tough, Should Your Teen Get a Job?

Encouraging teenage family members to find jobs is one way a family can increase its income during tough times. Many part-time jobs are available that fit into student schedules. Pay is usually minimum wage, but has the potential to make a significant contribution to the family income by defraying some expenses.

Parents and teenagers need to discuss and determine the number of hours that can be worked, how the money will be used, transportation and other family/school issues.

Work permits are required for young people under age 16. To secure a work permit, contact your local high school superintendent's office. Proof of age will be required to obtain a work permit so take your birth certificate with you to your appointment.

### Evaluating Employment Decisions

Researchers have studied individuals who grew up during the Depression and worked to help their families. They found work had an overall positive effect. As adults they were healthier psychologically and were better off for the work experience. Teens who have goals for the use of their earned income do better when spending their monies and they develop responsibility, good work skills and self-confidence from their employment.

But there can be some problems associated with teens working.

Research studies have found that youth who have no clear goals for their earnings spend more on luxuries and develop extravagant spending habits that lead to financial problems in adulthood. Also, these young people are more likely to spend earnings on alcohol and drugs, according to the studies.

Another item to consider is the fact that students who work more than 15 hours per week tend to lose interest in school and their grades drop.

Here's a list of ways a teen's income can be managed. Use it to guide a discussion with your teen on how his/her paycheck will be spent:

1. Use a portion for routine expenses incurred by your teen such as school lunches, clothes, gifts, dues and recreation. Save the remainder as an education fund.
2. Contribute a portion to the family household budget and keep a portion for your teen's personal expenses.
3. Contribute the entire wages to the family budget and give your teen an allowance.

The ideal way for your teen to become familiar with the expenses of the whole family is to assist with developing the family budget. When teens are highly involved in family money management, it's easier for them to understand the family financial situation and why they can't have some of the extras their friends may have. The hand-on involvement is a good tool to help teens develop their ability to set goals, make choices and also see the value of the family working together.