



Your rights as a worker

You have rights as a worker even if:

- you are not a Canadian citizen, a permanent resident, or a holder of a work permit,
- you just started the job,
- you work in your home or someone else's home,
- you live in someone else's home and you work for them,
- you must work in different places at different times to do the job,
- your job is full-time, part-time, or temporary.

Even if you signed a contract saying you are an "independent contractor" you still might have rights as a worker.

What rights do workers have?

There are laws about:

- the kinds of questions an employer can ask before they hire you,
- hours of work,
- minimum wage,
- vacation pay, holiday pay, and time off from work,
- health and safety in the workplace, and
- what you can do if you are fired or treated so badly that you are forced to quit.

There are different laws for different kinds of work. You need to find out what these laws say about the kind of work you do. Unions, some community agencies, and legal clinics may be able to help you with this.

What if someone discriminates against me as a worker?

The laws about human rights say that employers must not discriminate against you. And if other workers discriminate against you, your employer must take steps to make them stop.

Discrimination happens when someone refuses to hire you, treats you unfairly, or fires you because of your:

- race or ethnic background,
- religion,
- age,
- disability,
- sex,
- sexual orientation,
- pregnancy or because you have children.

This list shows many but not all kinds of discrimination.

What if other things at work are not fair for me?

Employers must do what they can to remove barriers that discriminate against you, unless they can show that it would be too hard for them to do this. This is called "accommodation".

So, for example, your employer must try to accommodate your religious needs. Maybe you need to wear certain things, take a break for prayer, or take time off for a religious holiday.

Because of your health, you might need to work indoors, or to sit, stand, or move around.

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After a pregnancy leave, you have the right to get back your job or a similar job.

These are just examples. You should get legal advice about your own situation.

What else can I do?

You may need to take legal action if your employer or someone at work treats you unfairly or does not respect your rights as a worker. There are time limits, so get legal advice right away.

Make notes about what happened, when, and where, and the names of anybody who saw or heard.

It is always a good idea to keep notes of the dates and hours you work. Also keep copies of any other documents that have to do with your job. 

On these pages, we give only general information. You should get legal advice about your own situation.

How to get help

If you have a union

The union's job is to protect workers' rights. Ask them for help. Usually, union dues are taken off your pay cheque if you are protected by a union.

If you do not have a union

Findhelp is a community agency that gives help in many languages. They take calls 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

They can tell you:

- where to get legal help, and
- how to contact a settlement agency or community agency for other kinds of help.

To contact Findhelp:

 Toll-free **1-866-667-5366**

 Toll-free TTY..... **1-888-340-1001**

 www.211ontario.ca

For more help:

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Visit www.cleo.on.ca to download these pages and other legal information.