

## TAKE OUR KIDS TO WORK DAY BEST PRACTICES

The fourth Thursday of April is designated as Take Our Kids to Work Day. Forbes magazine reports an estimated 37 million Americans in over 3.5 million workplaces participate each year. The day may include one-on-one job shadowing, facility visits, and hands-on non-hazardous work experience. If you think your child is perfectly safe shadowing you at work for a day, think again, incidents can and have happened to children in the workplace.

Now is an excellent time to start planning to ensure a safe and successful event and best practices should include:

- Develop a list of age-appropriate activities related to the type of work performed at your workplace. Safety must be a primary consideration, but some other thoughts include:
  - What age group or groups can be safely accommodated? Will you have a minimum age for participation? Consider time frames appropriate for the different age groups (2 hours for young children, 3-4 hours for older children, & 5-6 hours for teenagers).
  - Can all departments participate? If a department cannot, or will be severely limited by participating, can children from those departments attend elsewhere?
  - Considering some children may attend over multiple years, can you, as host, vary the experience?
  - What can you do to make the experience interactive while still maintaining a high level of safety for the children?
- Talk to similar workplaces to learn what went well and what they might have done differently.
- Have a written plan and schedule of activities. This will prevent freelancing by departments and facilitate incorporating what was learned from the previous years' events.
  - Start by asking yourself and the sponsoring departments to define the goal of the event. Will it be all fun and games, or will there be an instructional, service, or safety-related component?
  - Create a factsheet that can be shared with participating parents and children concerning the ground rules of the event.
  - Who will act as host/guide for the children? Each parent? A department representative who has been educated on the rules of the program? Someone else such as Human Resources?

Plan a strong and interesting welcome and closing for the children. Establish expectations of behavior and consequences for not meeting those expectations. Consider having the children sign a contract as part of the day's events.

- Establish a child-to-supervisor-child ratio that is appropriate for the specific workplace. Maintain a headcount of visitors in case of emergency.
- Children should not be permitted to operate or be around moving heavy machinery.

- Children should not be permitted in the vicinity of chemicals more hazardous than household chemicals used at household levels.
- Children should not be permitted in the vicinity of hazardous operations such as working at heights, with flame or flame-producing equipment, etc.
- Children should not see confidential information such as criminal, driving, or medical records.
- Provide properly sized personal protective equipment for tours of areas such as garages.
- Require an employee to precede the tour, inspect the area for hazards, and remove any unacceptable conditions (slippery floors, etc.) or operations (such as welding). Remind the representatives the inspection is for children, not the usual adult workforce.
- Give a morning briefing to all workers of departments hosting children for the event, which includes:
  - Rules for the children.
  - Awareness of adult behaviors & language when children are present.
  - An expectation of extra vigilance for safety concerns while having children in the work area.
- Will pictures be taken? By who? Will there be any restrictions on images of children and distribution/posting following the event?
- Provide notices that the organization is participating in the celebration, especially in areas where the presence/distraction of children may impact customers.
- Have each employee who wishes to bring a child to work, sign an acknowledgment with a clear explanation of permitted and non-permitted activities.
- If the workplace cannot be made safe and appropriate for children, consider hosting another activity, such as a picnic with lessons on the workplace, a poster contest, or work-related demonstrations/activities at an off-site and more appropriate facility.