

Recently-enacted changes to the Michigan Youth Employment Standards Act (YESA) warrant us revisiting our [Volunteer Policy](#). For background, this webinar from our attorneys at Foster Swift is recommended viewing: https://youtu.be/3m_46OoWy-s.

According to our both Library of Michigan Legal Specialist, Clare Membiela, and Foster Swift's Mike Blum, the issues are:

1. Under the law, there is basically no distinction between volunteers and employees.
2. Therefore, work permits are required for minor volunteers, and limits to hours apply. Major changes to how work permits operate are coming in October of 2026.
3. Our current policy allows for volunteers aged 12 and above, but YESA does not permit those under 14 to work, except for a very limited range of occupations that do not apply to libraries, so the allowed age in our policy needs to be raised to 14.
4. Boards, such as our Teen Advisory Council, fall under these YESA rules.

Recommended Changes

1. Change first sentence of "Volunteers Defined" from:
"Volunteers are people age 12 or older who provide special, unusual, or supplemental services to the library without wages or benefits." to:

"Volunteers are people age 14 or older who provide special, unusual, supplemental, or advisory services to the library without wages or benefits."
2. Change the 2nd sentence of "How to Become a Volunteer" from:
"Volunteers under 18 years of age must also have their application signed by a parent or guardian." to:

"Volunteers under 18 years of age must have a valid work permit, in addition to their application signed by a parent or guardian."
3. Add a new 3rd bullet point to the "Volunteer Hours of Work and Supervision" section:

"Those under 18 years of age will have limitations on the number of hours they can volunteer in accordance with the Michigan Youth Employment Standards Act."

Submitted by John Rucker