

Know Your Rights: Employment

This fact sheet is for educational purposes only. Nothing here should be considered legal advice. Please consult a lawyer for more specific information.

Updated as of March 2025

Getting the Job

- **Work Permit:**
 - Needed if you are under 18
- **What can you be asked during an interview?**
 - Questions relevant to the job (ex: availability, education, experience)
- **What CAN'T employers ask about**
 - Questions that are biased/discriminatory
 - In your initial application:
 - Previous salary/wage
 - Criminal record
 - Arrests that did not lead to conviction
 - Sealed records
 - First-time convictions for drunkenness, simple assault, speeding, minor traffic violations, affray (fighting in public), or disturbing the peace

During the Job

- **Minimum Wage/Pay**
 - Does not depend on your age
 - As of January 2024: \$15.00/ hour
 - If you are tipped, you must receive at least \$6.75/hour in cash wages
 - A combination of tips and cash wage must equal or exceed \$15.00
 - Some people may be paid less than minimum wage (ex: learners, apprentices, agricultural workers (\$8))
 - Pay frequency: Weekly or bi-weekly
- **Pay Deductions**
 - Employers must give you a pay slip listing all the deductions from your pay
 - Employers cannot make pay deductions for ordinary business costs (supplies, materials, tools) or cash shortages, property damage, etc.
- **Dress**
 - Employers can require you to dress and groom in certain ways (but they cannot discriminate)
 - If your employer asks you to buy/rent a uniform, your employer must pay for the uniform or refund the actual costs to you
- **If you feel like you have been unlawfully discriminated against you can contact:**
 - Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD)
 - Federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)

Quitting/Getting Fired

- **When can your employer fire you:**
 - If you do not have a written contract, your boss may fire you at any time for any reason (that is not discrimination)
- **AN OFFER LETTER IS NOT A CONTRACT OF EMPLOYMENT**
- **Unfair firing**
 - If you believe you were fired because you filed a complaint:
 - Contact the Massachusetts Attorney General's Office
 - If you think your employer discriminated against you:
 - File a complaint with:
 - The Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination
 - The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
- **Final Paycheck**
 - If you voluntarily quit, your employer must pay you no later than the time of the normal pay date
 - If you are fired/"let go" your employer must pay you on the day you are fired/let go
- **Unemployment benefits**
 - You can collect these benefits if you were laid off
 - You could collect benefits if you were fired or quit for certain reasons- even for part-time positions

Websites/Other Resources

- **MA Appleseed Homeless Youth Handbook:**
 - <https://www.homelessyouth.org/en/us/massachusetts>
- **MassHire Career Centers:**
 - <https://www.mass.gov/masshire-career-centers>
- **How to get a Work Permit:**
 - mass.gov/how-to/how-to-get-a-work-permit
- **Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination:**
 - <https://www.mass.gov/file-a-complaint-of-discrimination>
- **Check Eligibility for Unemployment Benefits:**
 - <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/check-eligibility-for-unemployment-benefits>
- **Paid Family and Medical Leave:**
 - <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/paid-family-and-medical-leave-pfml-overview-and-benefits>

