

Guide to Laws Prohibiting Forced Labor

in the United States

What is forced labor?

Forced labor is any work or service that a person is obliged to do against his or her will without payment or under threat.

The Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000 and other U.S. laws prohibit and sanction forced labor. Your employer could go to prison if he or she breaks the law.

Know your rights!

- You can work wherever and whenever you wish, providing your work is not illegal.
- No one can force you to provide your services to an employer if you are not paid and do not agree.
- If you are a foreigner, you have the same labor rights as a U.S. resident or citizen, regardless of whether you have a valid work permit.
- If you quit before your contract ends, no one can force you to return to work.

For more information on your labor rights, see [Guide to Minimum Employment Standards, Pay Deductions and Unemployment Compensation in the United States](#).

You must inform the authorities if:

- your employer threatens to physically mistreat you or another person if you leave your job;
- although you are not directly threatened, your employer says things that make you think that you or another person could be hurt if you leave your job;
- your employer attempts to take, keep or destroy your passport or immigration papers;
- your employer tries to stop you from leaving or traveling outside working hours;



- a “coyote” makes you work for free with the excuse of charging you for the “trip”;
- your employer forces you to work to pay a debt;
- your employer forces you to work in prostitution.



If you are victim of forced labor, you should call the National Worker Exploitation Task Force (WETF). This agency works to prevent worker exploitation in the United States and is responsible for investigating and processing all cases involving violations.

The telephone number is: 1-888-428-7581. The agency has operators that most likely will speak your language.

If you are a farm worker

- If your employer is a farm labor contractor or a farm labor contractor employer, he or she must be registered with the Department of Labor.
- Your employer must comply with minimum housing, health care and security standards at the workplace.
- Your employer must not pay you less than the minimum wage.

For more information, see [*Guide to the Law Protecting Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers in the United States*](#).

If you are a domestic worker

- You are not obliged to remain at your employer's home after finishing work.
- If you work overtime, you must be paid.
- Your employer cannot prevent you from leaving the house or visiting your friends.
- Your employer cannot take your immigration papers or passport.

The 13th Amendment of the Constitution prohibits involuntary labor, aside from work done by prisoners as part of their sentences.

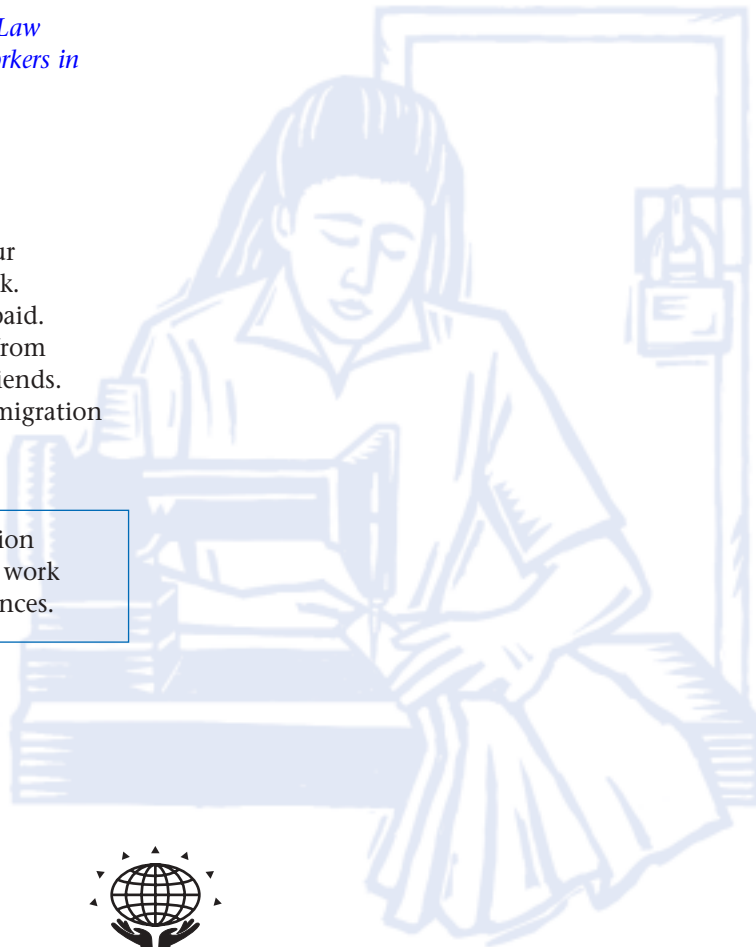
Contact telephone numbers

If you are a minor or are aware that a minor is being forced to work in prostitution, you should call:

Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section Criminal Division

U.S. Department of Justice
1331 F Street N.W.
6th Floor
Washington, DC 20530
Tel: (202) 514-5780
Fax: (202) 514-1793

If you want to know how much the minimum wage is in your state, you can call 1-866-487-9243.



Commission for Labor Cooperation