Children's Rights

Student Workbook

Answer Key

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What is the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*?

On November 20, 1989, many countries around the world adopted *the Convention on the Rights of the Child* (the "Convention") to protect the rights and well-being of children.

The Convention, designed for children under 18 years old, defines the fundamental needs of children. Countries that signed the Convention agreed to respect the rights listed in it.

The Convention has now been adopted by almost every country, making it the most widely-accepted human rights treaty in history. To mark the importance of the Convention, November 20 has become the official children's rights day.

Go over the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* with your teacher.

Answer the following questions

1) **What surprised you the most?**

2) **Why do you think a convention like this is important?**

3) **Which articles do you think are the most important? Why?**

4) Do you think these articles are respected everywhere in Quebec and around the world?

5) Do we have other laws in Quebec that protect children?

Exercise 1 – True or False

Instructions

Indicate if the following statements are **True** or **False**. Briefly explain your answer.

Then correct your answers based on the presentation and your teacher's explanations.

1) Children's rights are the same around the world.

☐ True ☒ False Why?

Even though 196 countries have signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), this does not mean that rights have been implemented the same way everywhere.

2) All children go to school, regardless of the country.

☐ True ☒ False Why?

Article 28 of the Convention states that all children have the right to education. In reality, about 250 million children do not go to school, due primarily to war, discrimination, poverty, and child marriage. UNESCO. (2024). 251 million children are still out of school worldwide, UNESCO reports.

3) In Quebec, children have access to free health care.

[X] True [ ] False Why?

Bill 83, adopted in June 2021 and enacted on September 22, 2021, expanded access to health insurance and medications for several categories of children, whether born in Quebec or not. The children concerned by this law are, in particular, those who accompany their parents who:

1. hold a valid study permit of more than six months.

2. hold a valid visitor's permit of more than six months,

3. hold a work permit of more than six months not related to a specific employer,

4. are in an irregular immigration situation [no legal status].

4) Child marriage is banned around the world.

[ ] True [X] False Why?

Child marriage is still legal or accepted in many countries, despite international laws.

- *Each year, some 12 million girls under 18 years of age are forced into marriage.*
- *In all, some 650 million women and girls around the world were married when they were still children.*
- *But it's not only girls. It's estimated that over 115 million boys were also married before adult age.*

5) In some countries, children are used as soldiers in armed conflicts.

[X] True [ ] False Why?

Requiring children to participate in war is prohibited by international law. Yet, it's estimated that over 250,000 children are involved in armed conflicts around the world.

- *Children are used as combatants, messengers, spies, etc.*
- *This situation affects or has affected the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, Syria, and Haiti, among other countries.*

6) All countries must guarantee children the right to play.

[X] True [ ] False Why?

Article 31 of the Convention states that children have the right to play and leisure. Therefore, all countries must guarantee children this fundamental right. Yet, this right is not always respected:

- *In war zones, children often do not have access to safe places to play.*
- *In impoverished communities, children often spend their days working.*

7) In Quebec, the minimum age for employment is 11 years.

[ ] True [X] False Why?

The minimum age for employment in Quebec is 14 years and certain conditions apply. Exception: Children under 14 years of age can occupy certain jobs (such as delivering newspapers and babysitting), but only with their parents' written authorization.

8) There are still places where children are not registered at birth.

[X] True [ ] False Why?

Having a birth certificate is an important right, recognized in article 7 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Yet, an estimated 150 million children do not have an official birth certificate.

9) Some children are separated from their parents when they immigrate.

[X] True [ ] False Why?

In certain countries, immigration laws have the effect of separating children from their parents, particularly in the case of irregular entry or asylum claims.

10) Children in Quebec have the right to express their opinion on decisions that affect them.

[X] True [ ] False Why?

Under article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, children have the right to express their opinion on decisions that affect them, depending on their age and level of maturity.

11) In some countries, children must work to help their families instead of going to school.

[X] True [ ] False Why?

Child labour affects approximately 160 million children around the world.

Examples:

- *In the Democratic Republic of Congo, children work in cobalt mines (essential for batteries).*
- *In India, some children manufacture bricks or clothing under dangerous conditions.*

12) Early and forced marriages only occur in developing countries.

[ ] True [X] False Why?

The phenomenon also exists in industrialized countries. In Canada, until 2015, some provinces permitted marriage at 14 years of age. Now, the minimum age is 16 years.

Add up your number of correct answers: /12

What surprised you the most during this exercise? What did you learn?

Exercise 2 – Which Rights Are Violated in This Scenario?

Instructions

On you own or in a team, identify the right or rights that are being violated and propose a solution to ensure they are respected.

Scenario 1 – Liam Left Alone

Liam is 8 years old. He spends most days alone in the small apartment where he lives with his parents. They're often not home. They work long hours or spend time with friends nearby. The refrigerator is often empty, and Liam mostly eats bread and peanut butter.

To get his parents' attention, the little boy sometimes leaves drawings on the table for them to see when they get home, but to no effect. His drawings end up in the garbage can. At school, his teacher is concerned because Liam is falling behind, and she tries to contact his parents to discuss the situation. But her calls are not returned.

On top of everything, Liam has pneumonia, which is getting worse by the day. Unfortunately, no one takes the time to get him to a clinic.

Right(s) violated under the Convention:

Best interests of the child (article 3), responsibilities of the parents (article 18) and protection from violence (abuse, article 19), the right to health, water, food and environment (article 24), the right to food, clothing, a safe home (article 27).

Proposed solutions:

Examples of answers: Talk about the situation to a trusted adult, for example, a teacher, a school monitor, a school social worker, or even a friend's parent. These people can listen to him and refer him to places where he can get help.

Consult a health care establishment (CLSC, clinic, or hospital). Liam needs immediate care. Even without his parents, he can be accompanied by an adult and receive care if the situation is urgent.

Report the situation to youth protection. If a child does not receive the care and attention they need, an adult can report the situation to youth protection.

Contact a community organization. Resources like Tel-jeunes offer listening and support. They can help find solutions, even if there's a difficult situation at home.

Scenario 2 – A Kiss With Serious Consequences

On a warm summer evening, Maeva, 15 years old, shares an intimate moment with her best friend, Clara, in her parents' yard. Under the stars, a timid but earnest kiss seals their affection.

Their happiness is brutally interrupted by the stony voice of Maeva's mother, who's been watching them from the window. Shocked and furious, her parents call her into the living room. They accuse her of straying from the right path, and, despite her protests, they decide to sign her up for conversion therapy, recommended by their religious community.

With every passing day, Maeva sinks further into confusion and loneliness.

Right(s) violated under the Convention:

Same rights for all (article 2), respect for the opinions of children (article 12), freedom to share ideas (article 13), freedom of thought and religion (article 14), creating or joining groups (article 15).

Proposed solutions:

Examples of answers: talk about the situation to a trusted adult, for example, a teacher, a school monitor, a school social worker, or even a friend's parent. These people can listen to her and refer her to places to get help.

Call an LGBTQ+ organization to get advice, file a complaint with the police, or with youth protection.

Scenario 3 – Jacob the Prodigy – But at What Price?

Jacob, 14 years old, is a prodigy at playing the cello. His life is as regimented as a clock: school in the morning, return home for four hours of intensive practice, then individual classes in the evening. Weekends are reserved for rehearsals and auditions. His parents, captivated by his talent, believe he'll be a star one day and are rigid in their plan for his future.

When Jacob says he'd like to join the soccer team or attend a drawing workshop, they dismiss it out of hand. "You have a gift, Jacob, and the world is waiting to hear it," his father says. Jacob's playing feels heavier with every note, as if the cello were his prison. He starts to wonder if his talent is a gift ... or a curse.

Right(s) violated under the Convention:

Best interests of the child (article 3), respect for children's views (article 12), responsibility for the child (article 18), right to rest, play, culture and arts (article 31).

Proposed solutions:

Examples of answers: Write a letter to his parents (that way, his parents can't cut him off when he's talking), talk about the situation to a trusted adult (principal, schoolteacher, or music teacher, family member). If some students suggest sabotaging his auditions or breaking his instrument, and he does either, it's important that a discussion be held with the parents following the action in question.

Scenario 4 – "You're Too Young to Understand These Things."

Maya, 16 years old, is a lively and passionate teen with a critical mind. At school, she dares to ask questions about sensitive issues, such as social injustice and the environment.

But each time she expresses herself, she's told to keep quiet. Some of her teachers reprimand her repeatedly, telling her to focus on her studies and to stop triggering "useless debates." At home, it's worse: her parents forbid her from sharing her views online or participating in demonstrations. Her mother tells her: "You're too young to understand these things."

Maya feels muzzled, cloaked in a silence that's stifling her desire to express herself and take action.

Right(s) violated under the Convention:

Sharing thoughts freely (article 13), freedom of thought and religion (article 14), objectives of education (article 29).

Proposed solutions:

Examples of answers: Join the student newspaper, talk about the situation to a trusted adult, keep a journal to express herself, organize meetings with students who have similar interests.

Exercise 3 – In-Depth Analysis of a Scenario

Instructions

In teams, analyze a scenario describing a situation experienced by a teen.

Each scenario will address one of the following themes:

- Gender identity, scenario 1, page 15.
- Freedom of religion of children and teenagers, scenario 2, page 18.
- The rights of children when parents divorce, scenario 3, page 21.
- Children and teenagers and work, scenario 4, page 24.

You must:

- Respond to various suggestions for discussion.
- Identify the rights being violated based on the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* and/or on other legal documents (*Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms*, *Civil Code of Québec*, *Act respecting labour standards*, etc.).
- Prepare a presentation that includes a summary of the scenario, the main points discussed, and the rights violated based on the legal documents.

A few articles of the *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms* and the *Civil Code of Québec*, along with excerpts from the *Act respecting labour standards*, are presented in your Workbook, on pages 27 and 28.

During the presentations, complete the questions related to each scenario.

Scenario 1 – The Right to Gender Identity: Alex's Work Wishes

Alex, 15 years old, is in Grade 9 in a high school in Quebec. Assigned the female gender at birth, Alex identifies as a boy and started to live according to his gender identity about a year ago. During the school year, Alex decides to apply for a part-time job at the local grocery store. Two of his female friends, who work at the store as cashiers, encourage him to apply. Alex would like to be a cashier like his friends, having worked the cash at a fruit and vegetable stand last summer.

He's hired, but his first duties are to manage different types of packaging, mainly in the warehouse. Being resilient, he figures it's probably something everyone has to do when they first start. But after a few months, he notices that it's almost only men working in the warehouse and stocking shelves, while it's mostly women who work the cashes. He does note, however, that men sometimes replace employees at the cash.

His recent observations and discussions with his friends prompt him to talk to his supervisor. During the meeting, Alex talks about his experience at the fruit and vegetable stand and, above all, his desire to work more with the public.

His supervisor is somewhat hesitant but decides to explain to him that there's an issue related to his appearance. In the past, he had a trans cashier, and this led to complaints from customers who felt uncomfortable. Some customers even avoided that employee's cash. As a result, the grocery store decided to no longer assign trans people to that position but rather give them other tasks in the store.

Alex leaves the office with a heavy heart. He feels all kinds of emotions—frustration with the customers who are not open-minded, discouragement, and discomfort with his gender identity.

Refusing to accept this injustice, Alex decides to fight back. He talks to his parents, who supported him during his gender transition. They comfort him and help him write a formal complaint to the manager of the grocery store.

A few days later, Alex is called into the manager's office to discuss the situation. The supervisor is also present. The manager asks each of them to present their point of view and their solutions.

Start by taking a position. What would you do if you were in Alex's position? Support your answer based on applicable laws in Quebec and the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*.

SUGGESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- Can the employer decide Alex's tasks based on his sex or gender?
- Do past complaints from customers justify the employer's decision?
- How could this situation affect Alex's well-being and morale?
- What can Alex do to defend his right to perform the tasks he wants?
- How can Alex's situation help customers understand the importance of inclusivity in the workplace?
- What can be done to ensure that all employees, regardless of their gender identity, feel like they belong in their workplace?
- Should employers and supervisors be made more aware of and receive training on how to respect gender differences to avoid future discrimination?

Team notes:

Legal information to support your discussions

(*Convention on the Rights of the Child*, *Civil Code of Québec*, *Act respecting labour standards*, *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms*, etc.)

Rights(s) violated under the Convention:

- *Article 2 of the Convention states that all children have the same rights no matter who they are, what they think, what they look like, their gender identity, etc. No child should be treated unfairly for any reason.*
- *Under article 12 of the Convention, when they're capable of understanding, children have the right to express their opinions on subjects that affect them, and these opinions must be considered.*

Other legal text:

Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms (Quebec)

Section(s):

Section 10 of the Charter states that no one can be treated differently or unjustly based on origin, appearance, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, or any other personal characteristic. All human beings must be treated with respect and equality.

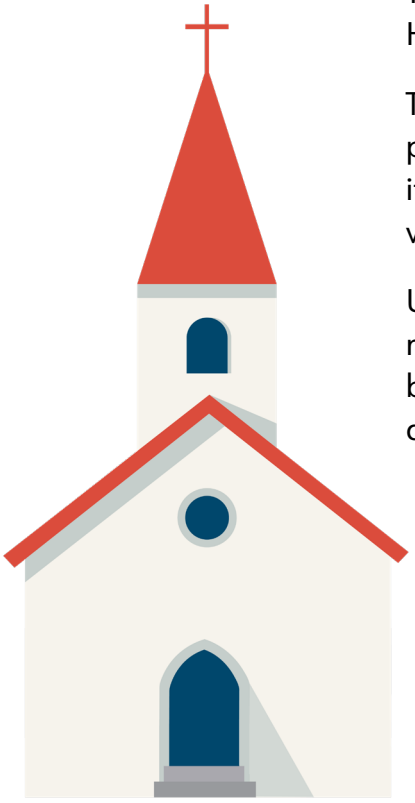
Other legal text:

Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms (Quebec)

Section(s):

Section 16 of the Charter states that no one can be discriminated against at work or in training based on their origin, age, sex, gender, etc. This includes hiring, training, promotion, and other working conditions.

Scenario 2 – Freedom of Religion of Children and Teenagers: Thomas, His Parents and Their Religion



Thomas is 13 years old and lives with both his parents. He generally gets along with them.

Thomas's parents are very religiously observant. Religion plays an essential role in their lives. As parents, they consider it their right, if not their duty, to transmit their religious values to their son.

Until recently, Thomas had agreed to follow his parents' religious practices. But lately, he has been questioning his beliefs. Frankly, he is bored with the rituals. To his parents' dismay, Thomas is now refusing to follow their beliefs. They are really trying to understand his decision, but Thomas has told them: "It's not important to me! I'd rather play video games."

His father was very angry and told him: "You're too young to decide to stop practicing your religion. You can choose for yourself when you're older!" Then his parents grounded him and suspended his allowance.

Wanting him to understand their point of view, Thomas's parents set up a meeting with their parish priest. The priest provides a space where each of them can feel safe to express themselves, despite their different opinions.

Start by taking a position. What would you do if you were in Thomas's place? Support your answer based on applicable laws in Quebec and on the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*.

SUGGESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- Does Thomas have the right to choose his own religion or even to have no religion?
- Why is it important for Thomas to have the freedom to choose his religious beliefs?
- Do Thomas's parents have the right to force him to go to mass if he doesn't want to?
- Is it fair that his parents forbid him from going out and stop giving him his allowance because he refuses to go to mass?
- What can Thomas do if he wants to respect his own choices while also being respectful of his parents?
- Is the meeting with the priest a good idea to help Thomas and his parents better understand each other?

Team notes:

Legal information to support your discussions

(*Convention on the Rights of the Child*, *Civil Code of Québec*, *Act respecting labour standards*, *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms*, etc.)

Rights(s) violated under the Convention:

- *According to article 12 of the Convention, children have the right to express their opinions freely on issues that affect them. Adults must listen and take what they say seriously.*
- *Article 14 of the Convention states that children have the right to their own opinions and thoughts and to choose their religion and beliefs, as long as this does not stop others from enjoying the same rights. Parents can guide their children and teach them, as they grow up, to exercise these rights positively.*

Other legal text:

Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms (Quebec)

Section(s):

Section 3 of the Charter states that everyone has the right to freedom of thought, freedom of religion, or to have no religion.

Other legal text:

Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms (Quebec)

Section(s):

Section 41 of the Charter states that parents have the right to transmit their beliefs and values to their children, as long as this respects their children's rights and wellbeing.

Scenario 3 – The Rights of Children When Parents Divorce: Caught Between Parents—An Agonizing Choice

Every day in Canada and other countries, young people are dealing with the divorce of their parents. This is the story of a 15-year-old Quebecer in this situation. His name is Daniel Okpik.

Daniel is stressed. On top of homework, exams and hockey tournaments, he is worried about something else: his parents are divorcing after years of arguing. Divorce is often painful, and in Daniel's case, complicated. Daniel lives in Gatineau. His father is Inuk, and Daniel identifies a lot with Inuit culture. But his mother is not Inuk. She is moving soon to Rimouski to live with her new boyfriend and she absolutely wants Daniel to move and live with her. She has already registered Daniel in an excellent private school with good sports teams. This school could also help Daniel achieve his dream of becoming an airline pilot. It's all tempting, but Rimouski is far from Gatineau! (About 8 hours).

Daniel is not certain he's ready to leave Gatineau. It's the first time in a long time his hockey team has a good chance of winning the provincial tournament. Also, he can't imagine living without his friends. He spends almost more time with them than with his parents! On top of this, he's been with his girlfriend for more than a year and definitely doesn't want to leave her behind.

Of course, his father wants him to stay in Gatineau. If he leaves with his mother, he'll have limited contact with his Inuit roots and culture, which he mostly gets from his father. Also, visiting his father's relatives in northern Quebec will be more difficult from Rimouski than from Gatineau. And Daniel is not ready to give up the weekend camping, fishing and hunting excursions with his father and his extended family!

Daniel faces an agonizing dilemma: should he go to Rimouski or stay in Gatineau? He will really miss his mother but prefers to stay with his father. Daniel wants to have his say about the issue. He is going to court soon to tell the judge why he wants to stay. The judge will make the final decision.

Trying to figure out what he should do, Daniel asks your opinion. Start by taking a position. Should he stay in Gatineau or move to Rimouski? Support your answer based on applicable laws in Quebec and on the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*.

SUGGESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- Why is it important for Daniel to stay close to his friends and his activities in Gatineau, such as hockey?
- Does Daniel have the right to choose where he wants to live, even if his parents have different opinions?
- Do Daniel's parents have the right to make the decision for him?
- Does Daniel's opinion have to be considered in this important life decision?
- What could Daniel do to express his feelings and needs while respecting his parents' opinions?
- How can a judge determine what's best for Daniel, taking into account his family and cultural ties?
- How can Daniel's situation serve as an example for other children who also have to choose between their parents after a divorce?

Team notes:

Legal information to support your discussions

(*Convention on the Rights of the Child*, *Civil Code of Québec*, *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms*, etc.)

Rights(s) violated under the Convention:

- *According to article 9 of the Convention, children have the right to live with their parents, unless the parents are incapable of looking after them. If the parents do not live together, the children have the right to stay in contact with them, unless it's not in the children's best interests.*
- *According to article 12 of the Convention, when children are capable of understanding, they have the right to express their opinions on subjects that affect them, and these opinions must be considered.*

Other legal text:

Civil Code of Québec

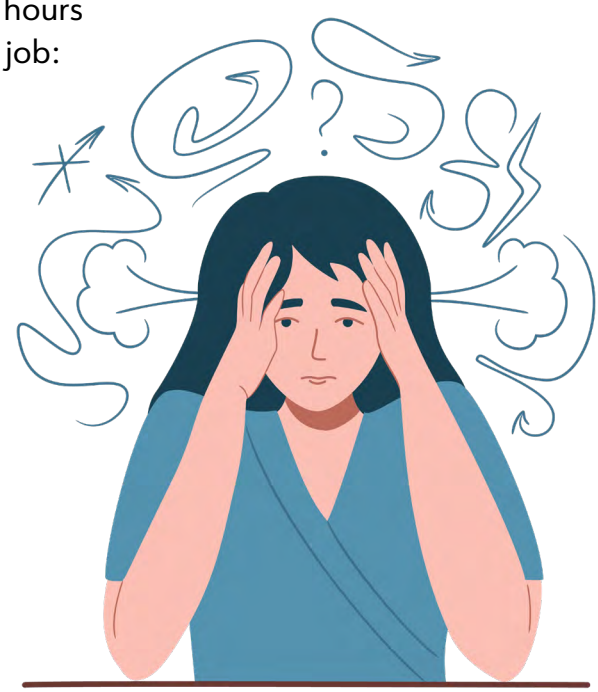
Section(s):

According to section 33 of the Civil Code, all decisions made for a child must take into account what is in their best interests. This includes consideration of their emotional, physical, intellectual, and moral needs, their age, health, personality, and family environment.

Scenario 4 – Children and Teenagers and Work: Between School and Work, It's Hard to Keep Up the Pace!

Melanie, 16 years old, has a dilemma. She has been going nonstop for the past few months and is exhausted. You are a social worker with an organization for youth. Melanie is asking for your advice.

Since the age of 12, Melanie has been working a few hours a week in her family's restaurant. She has done every job: waiter, kitchen helper and cashier! For the last few months, the restaurant has not been doing well. It has been losing customers, especially since a snack bar opened up nearby. Melanie's parents are working twice as hard as usual to make up the financial losses. They let the chef go and are doing the cooking themselves, which means they are both working more than 70 hours a week. To help them out, Melanie sometimes works until 11 p.m. several nights a week.



Melanie has still not missed school, but she has no time for anything but work and going to class. The long hours at the restaurant are starting to affect her studies. She also has no time to practice her cello. Melanie knows that she will need really high marks to get into a music program at CEGEP. On top of that, she needs to do well in an upcoming audition.

On the other hand, Melanie doesn't want to quit her job, even if her parents only pay minimum wage. The job pays for her music lessons. Her parents have other priorities right now than paying for her lessons. Her restaurant job has also let Melanie save money for school and a cello. A good cello, even used, costs at least $2,500.

Melanie knows that her parents are counting on her during this difficult time. They could never find an employee as efficient as she is who is willing to put in as many hours. On top of that, no one knows the restaurant as well as their own daughter!

Melanie feels trapped by the situation and asks your opinion. Should she patiently wait things out and continue to help her parents at the restaurant, or should she quit her job? Support your answer based on applicable laws in Quebec and on the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*.

SUGGESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- Can Melanie's parents require her to work so many hours, even if this is having a negative impact on her studies?
- Do Melanie's parents have a responsibility to ensure there's a balance between her work and studies?
- Does Melanie have the right to express her opinion about how many hours she works?
- Why is it important for Melanie to be able to balance her work, studies, and personal activities?
- What could Melanie do to talk to her parents about the impact her job is having on her studies and well-being?

Team notes:

Legal information to support your discussions

(*Convention on the Rights of the Child*, *Civil Code of Québec*, *Act respecting labour standards*, *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms*, etc.)

Rights(s) violated under the Convention:

- *According to article 12 of the Convention, children have the right to express their opinions freely on issues that affect them. Adults must listen to them and take what they say seriously.*
- *According to article 32 of the Convention, children have the right to be protected from doing work that is dangerous, bad for their health, that prevents them from going to school, or prevents them from having leisure time and rest. If they are working, children have the right to be paid fairly.*
- *The best interests of the child (article 3) and the right to rest, play, culture and arts (article 31) could also be mentioned.*

Other legal text:

Act respecting labour standards

Section(s):

- *According to section 84.2, an employer must not make a child work excessively or in a way that could harm their education, health, or development.*
- *According to section 84.3, children under 14 years of age are not permitted to work, except in special cases.*
- *According to section 84.4, a child is not permitted to work during school hours and cannot work more than 17 hours a week or 10 hours from Monday to Friday. This does not apply during school vacation.*

Other legal text:

Regulation respecting labour standards

Section(s):

According to section 35.0.3, a child under 14 years of age has the right to work in a family business if it has fewer than 10 employees, and they are the child of the person who owns the business.

Legal provisions

The provisions described below have been written in everyday language based on the original texts.

Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms (Quebec)

1. Every person has the right to life, personal security, to not be injured, and to make their own choices.

3. Every person has the right to freedom of thought, freedom of religion (or to have no religion), freedom of expression, and freedom to peacefully assemble with others.

10. No one can be treated differently or unjustly based on their origin, appearance, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, or any other personal characteristic. Every person must be treated with respect and equality.

16. No one can be discriminated against at work or in training based on their origin, age, sex, gender, etc. This includes hiring, training, promotion, and other work conditions.

39. Every child has the right to protection, security, and support from their parents or the adults looking after them.

41. Parents have the right to transmit their religious beliefs and values to their children, as long as this respects their children's rights and wellbeing.

43. People belonging to a cultural minority have the right to keep their culture alive and to share it with the members of their community.

Civil Code of Québec

33. Every decision made for a child must take their best interests into account. This includes:

- their emotional, physical, intellectual, and moral needs,
- their age, health, and personality,
- their family life (including whether or not there is violence).

Act respecting labour standards

84.2. An employer cannot require a child to do work that is too difficult for them or work that harms their health, development, or education.

84.3. A child under 14 years of age is not permitted to work, except under specific rules.

84.4. A child who must attend school cannot work during school hours. They are also not permitted to work:

- more than 17 hours a week, or
- more than 10 hours from Monday to Friday.

These rules do not apply during school vacation.

Regulation respecting labour standards

35.0.3. A child under 14 years of age can work in certain specific cases, for example, they can work in a family business if it has fewer than 10 employees, and they are the child of the person who owns the business.