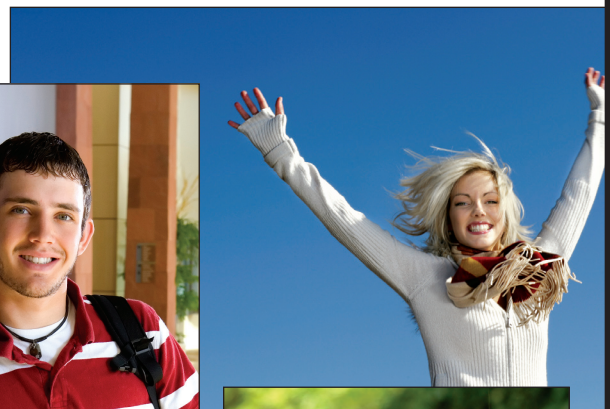
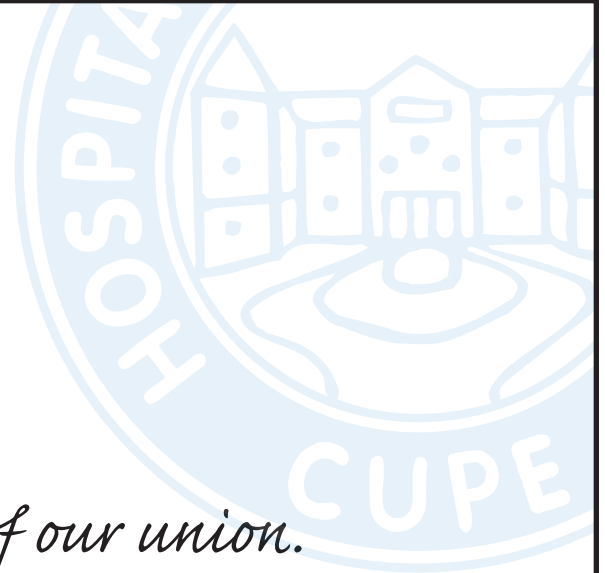


# Involve Educate Inspire

*Young workers are the future of our union.*



A **resource  
guide** for  
engaging  
young workers  
in HEU





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# Involve, Educate, Inspire

*A resource guide for engaging young workers in HEU*

## WHY ENGAGE NEW AND YOUNG WORKERS IN THE UNION?

Let's face it none of us are getting any younger.

Without a movement to involve, inspire, and activate young workers, we risk losing the gains and knowledge we've worked so hard to build over the years.

A strong union today and a strong union in the future requires planning and mentoring from union activists and leaders like you.

It's important that young union members understand the history behind the hard-fought rights that we enjoy today.

Remember how you got involved in the union? If others had not reached out to you and explained things to you, would you be involved now? Or maybe you wished there had been someone along the way to offer advice and support, as you became the activist you are now.

Today, you have an opportunity to be that mentor and friend. Effective leadership means helping to develop the abilities and the capacity for leadership in others.

Across Canada, unions have recognized that we must mobilize the next generation of activists. This guide is created to help your Local be part of that movement.

## WHO ARE 'YOUNG WORKERS' AND WHERE ARE THEY?

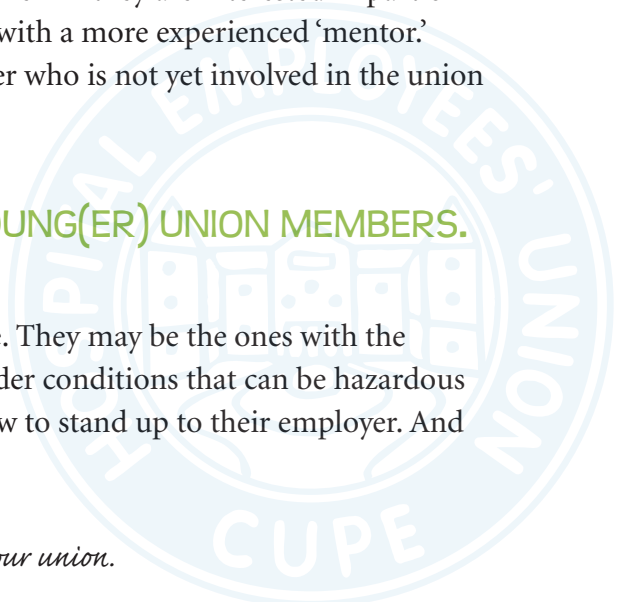
There is no specific definition of a 'young worker.' The BC Federation of Labour's and HEU's Young Workers Committees includes union members who are 30-years-old and under. But for some members, that definition doesn't apply to them.

An easy way to reach out to young workers is to simply ask them if they are interested in participating in an event, coming to a meeting or being paired up with a more experienced 'mentor.' Even if they don't identify as a 'young worker,' a new member who is not yet involved in the union will benefit from making connections with the Local.

## THINGS TO REMEMBER WHEN ENGAGING YOUNG(ER) UNION MEMBERS.

*It's about rights*

Young workers are often the most vulnerable in a workplace. They may be the ones with the temporary or part-time jobs. They may work odd hours under conditions that can be hazardous to their health and safety. They may not know when and how to stand up to their employer. And



they may not know where to start when it comes to learning about and enforcing their rights.

Reaching out to young members also helps ensure that each and every HEU member knows and is enforcing their collective agreement rights. Reaching out to young members helps ensure that everyone is being treated fairly in a safe work environment.

With more active members, the union has more shop stewards, more OHS activists, and stronger Locals, all of which benefit the union as a whole.

### *New members bring new energy and new ideas*

The energy, experience and ideas of a new generation will keep HEU strong and dynamic. Revitalizing and re-energizing our union will be a key challenge in the coming years. New members who haven't typically been involved in the union, including younger members, will bring fresh approaches and perspectives to our work for equality and justice in the workplace and in society.

### *You don't have to 'get it right' the first time*

There isn't a one-size-fits-all model for activating young workers or other new members. That's why it's important to be creative and try new things. Don't be afraid to make mistakes. And when you have successes, share them with other Locals in your region and with other union members.

## **BUILDING BRIDGES ACROSS BARRIERS**

Like any other member, young workers may have a variety of reasons for not being involved in the union. Here are a few to consider.

### *Possible barriers to young or new members' involvement in the union*

- Younger members may feel more intimidated by their manager or employer.
- They may have had a negative experience at their first union meeting, where they felt excluded or confused.
- They may have misconceptions about what a union is and why we have unions in the workplace.
- They may be working casual shifts or juggling more than one job and find it hard to make time to get involved in union activities.
- They may think that union education or conference opportunities are only open to permanent employees or members who are already involved in HEU.

### *Building bridges to overcome barriers*

- Hold a lunchtime session where all new or young members can come and share their questions or concerns about workplace issues.

- Make meetings a welcoming place to be. (See the section below on meetings).
- Make a point of offering to answer younger members' questions.
- As local leaders, be accessible and visible.
- Offer mentoring and support to younger members who want to take on more leadership roles. (See the section below for ideas on setting up a mentoring system).
- Find out what young workers want to know. What are their concerns in the workplace? What issues do they care about? How can the union be involved in the things that matter to young members?
- Be open to all ideas and issues that come forward.

## SOME TIPS FOR MAKING MEETINGS ACCESSIBLE TO YOUNG WORKERS

A member's first meeting is like a first impression. If it goes well, new members are more likely to come back and feel a part of the union. But if it's a negative or intimidating experience, for many members it will be their first and last union meeting.

Here are a few ideas for creating a meeting that leaves a good first impression:

- At the beginning, explain the rules used to run meetings.
- Leave time at the beginning, middle, and end of every meeting for new members to ask questions. Let new members know that all questions are welcome.
- Use plain language when talking about issues.
- After the meeting, follow up with the new member to find out if they have questions, thoughts or ideas they'd like to share.

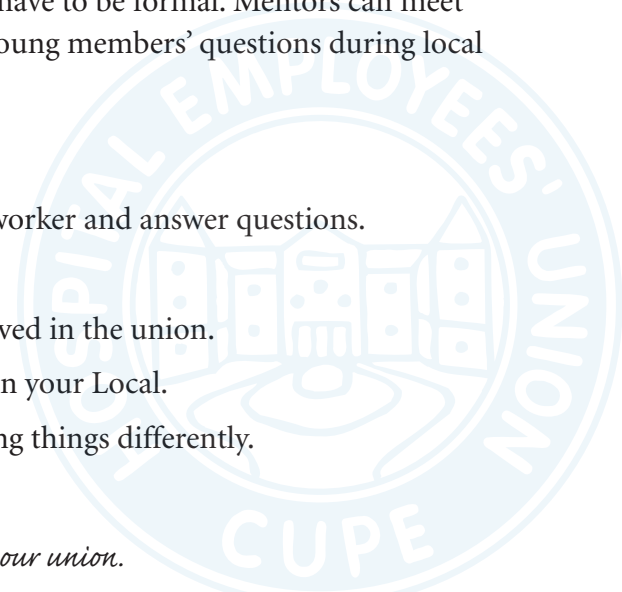
## THINKING BEYOND MEETINGS

### *Set up a buddy or mentorship system*

Create a sign-up sheet for experienced activists and one for young or new workers who are interested in participating in the mentor program. This doesn't have to be formal. Mentors can meet for coffee on a break. They can just volunteer to answer a young members' questions during local meetings. The possibilities are endless.

### *What do I have to do to be a mentor?*

- Make time available to regularly talk with a young worker and answer questions.
- Participate in union events with a young worker.
- Explore creative ways for young workers to be involved in the union.
- Support young workers to take on leadership roles in your Local.
- Be willing to listen to new ideas and be open to doing things differently.



- Involvement  
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- Be prepared to share power and listen.
  - Offer challenges to the person you're mentoring that will help build their skills and confidence.
  - Be open to learning from the person you're mentoring.

### *Leave space and create opportunities for involvement*

- Encourage and support young workers to attend union education opportunities and events.
- Consider selecting young workers in your Local to attend conferences and conventions.
- Bring young workers together so they can get to know each other, share stories and experiences.
- Find out what young workers are concerned about and try to find ways to respond. This may mean supporting new causes or trying new things.

### *Be persistent*

Don't give up. It may take a while to involve young workers in the union.

Start small and expand. Getting one or two young workers involved in the union each year will make a big difference over time.

Young workers may also come and go more frequently, but remember that they'll take their positive union experiences with them!

### **OTHER RESOURCES:**

[www.cupe.ca/youngworkers](http://www.cupe.ca/youngworkers)

[www.bcfed.org/issues/youth](http://www.bcfed.org/issues/youth)

[www.heu.org](http://www.heu.org)

Or call 604-456-7084 or 1-800-663-5813 ext. 7084.