

California Coogan Law Information

Child Labor News

Keeping entertainment industry professionals informed!

Coogan Act History

In 1919, five year-old Jackie Coogan (1914-1984) got his big break, landing a role opposite legendary actor/director Charlie Chaplin in *"A Days Pleasure"*. Two years later, Chaplin hired Coogan again for *"The Kid"*. The film was a huge success and Jackie Coogan became the world's first major child superstar. With fame came fortune, and for decades Jackie Coogan held the record of being the youngest millionaire in history. He earned an estimated \$4 million as a child star.

Unfortunately for Jackie, in the 1920's there were no restrictions on how children in film were to be treated. In addition to improper treatment on set, (one director reportedly threatened to shoot Jackie's dog to get him to cry), in 1938 Jackie was forced to sue his mother and step-father for what was left of his earnings. The court decided that Jackie had no right to his income due to his age at the time he earned it. The public uproar over this situation caused California to pass "The Coogan Act" in 1938.

The Coogan Law preserves a portion of a child performer's earnings until that child reaches adulthood. The act has been revised a few times since 1938, most recently on January 1st, 2004.

What is a Coogan Account?

A "Coogan Trust Account" is a blocked trust account that is established at a qualified financial institution in California that is insured at all times by either the [FDIC](#), [SIPC](#) or [NCUSIF](#).

Under California law, whenever a minor renders artistic services, employers are required to deposit 15% of gross earnings directly into the minor's "Coogan (blocked trust) Account". The monies placed in trust cannot be touched by anyone until the minor turns 18 or becomes legally emancipated.

Parents or Legal Guardians are required to establish a "Coogan Trust Account" within seven business days after a minor's employment contract is signed, and to provide the minor's employer with a copy of a trustee's statement (evidencing proof of the account) within ten (10) business days after the start of employment.

credit union, brokerage firm, or company registered under the Investment Company Act of 1940. To view a partial list of qualified financial institutions. For more information on California's Coogan Law.

Coogan Account Update

On January 1st, 2004, the California Coogan law was amended. The following changes are now in effect:

Actors Fund of America

If a parent, guardian or trustee fails to provide the minor's employer with a trustee's statement within 180 days after the start of employment, the employer shall forward the set-aside funds to the [Actors Fund of America](#) (a non-profit organization that provides services to performers in the entertainment industry). The Actors Fund shall become the trustee of such funds until the parent/guardian produces the trustee statement, the minor turns 18, or the minor becomes legally emancipated.

Entertainment Work Permits void without Coogan

California entertainment work permits are now void 10 business days after the date of issuance unless a copy of the trustee's statement evidencing the establishment of a "Coogan Trust Account", for the benefit of the minor, is attached.