# Supplemental Guidance: Child Labor Risks in Data Center Construction

Artificial intelligence (AI) infrastructure is rapidly expanding across the U.S., including the construction and operation of large-scale data centers. U.S. data center construction starts spending reached an annualized rate of $45 billion by December 2025 — more than double the prior year — and approximately 6.0 GW of capacity was under construction in primary U.S. markets at the end of 2025, with a broader pipeline of 241 GW disclosed nationwide. As a result, domestic child labor risks may arise within U.S.-based supply chains, such as:

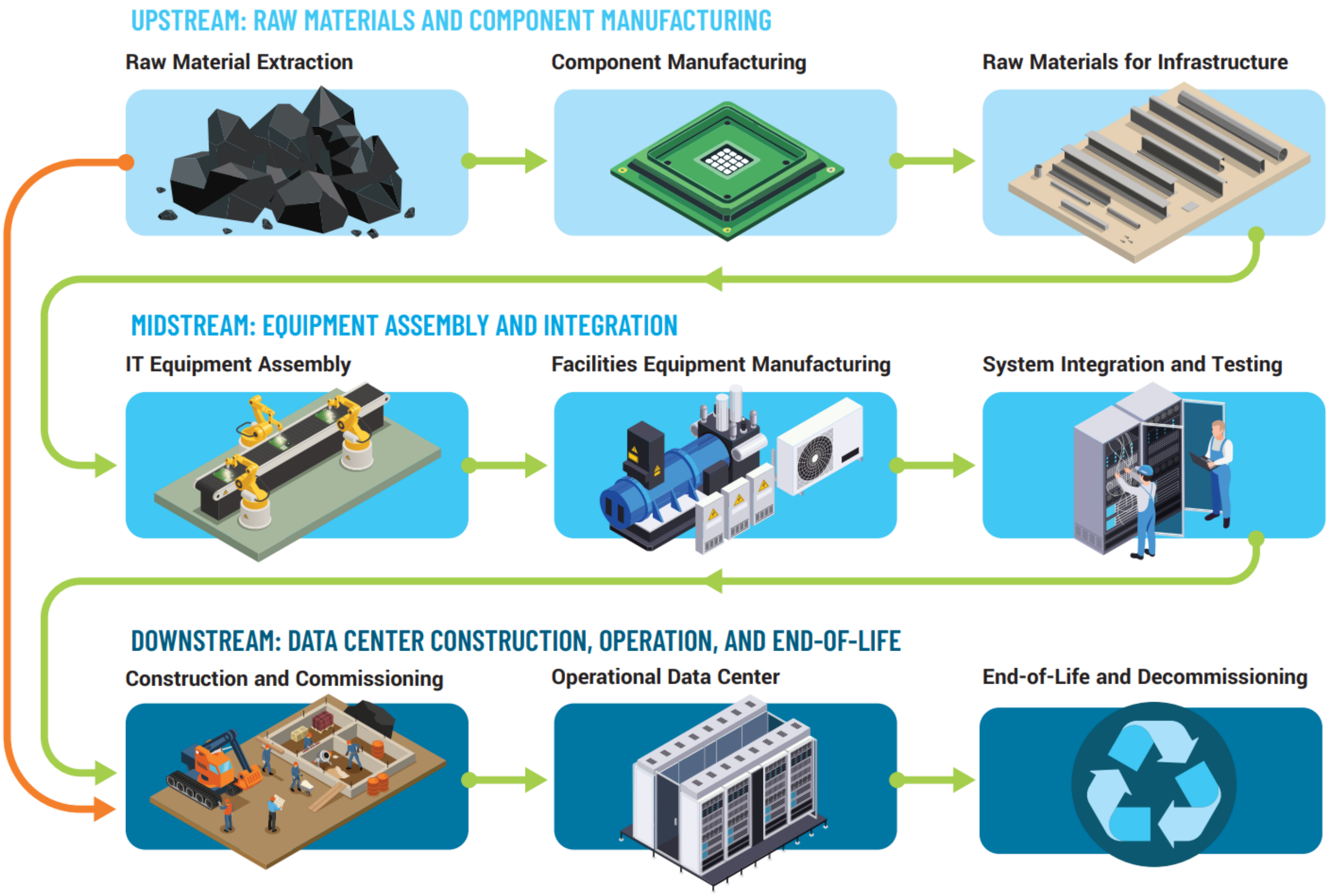
- increased demand for low-cost labor, which overwhelms traditional age verification practices
- extensive construction and other hazardous work
- overnight and third-shift schedules
- heavy reliance on subcontractors and labor brokers

## Mapping the Supply Chain

These risks are particularly relevant in construction subcontracting, warehousing and logistics, cleaning and facilities services, food service vendors, and domestic manufacturing inputs used in AI infrastructure projects. Multiple layers of subcontractors and labor brokers may obscure age verification practices and create heightened risk for unlawful employment of children from vulnerable populations. Rapid construction timelines can also create incentives to bypass verification controls

Given the rapid pace of AI infrastructure buildouts, subcontracting chains may shift quickly. Ongoing updating of stakeholder maps is essential to ensure children are not working in hazardous construction or industrial roles. The visualization below provides an illustrative example of the data center supply chain to inform stakeholder mapping.

## LIFECYCLE FLOW




### Assessing the Risks by Supply Chain Segment

In the U.S. data center supply chain, companies should conduct enhanced risk assessments, which prioritize the following supply chain segments and potential risks areas.

| U.S. Supply Chain Segment | Example Risks |
|---|---|
| **Construction**, including prime contractors and sub-tier subcontractors | • Employment of children in hazardous electrical, excavation, roofing, or heavy equipment roles<br>• Excessive hours worked by 16–17-year-olds<br>• Falsified or inconsistent age documentation |
| **Staffing providers**, including temporary labor providers and labor brokers | • Recruitment of children from vulnerable populations<br>• Lack of standardized age verification across agencies |
| **Warehousing and logistics partners** | • Children assigned to operate forklifts or hazardous equipment<br>• Extended night shifts during equipment delivery cycles |
| **Facilities services**, including cleaning, security, landscaping | • Cleaning or maintenance of energized electrical systems<br>• Overnight shifts during operational ramp-up |

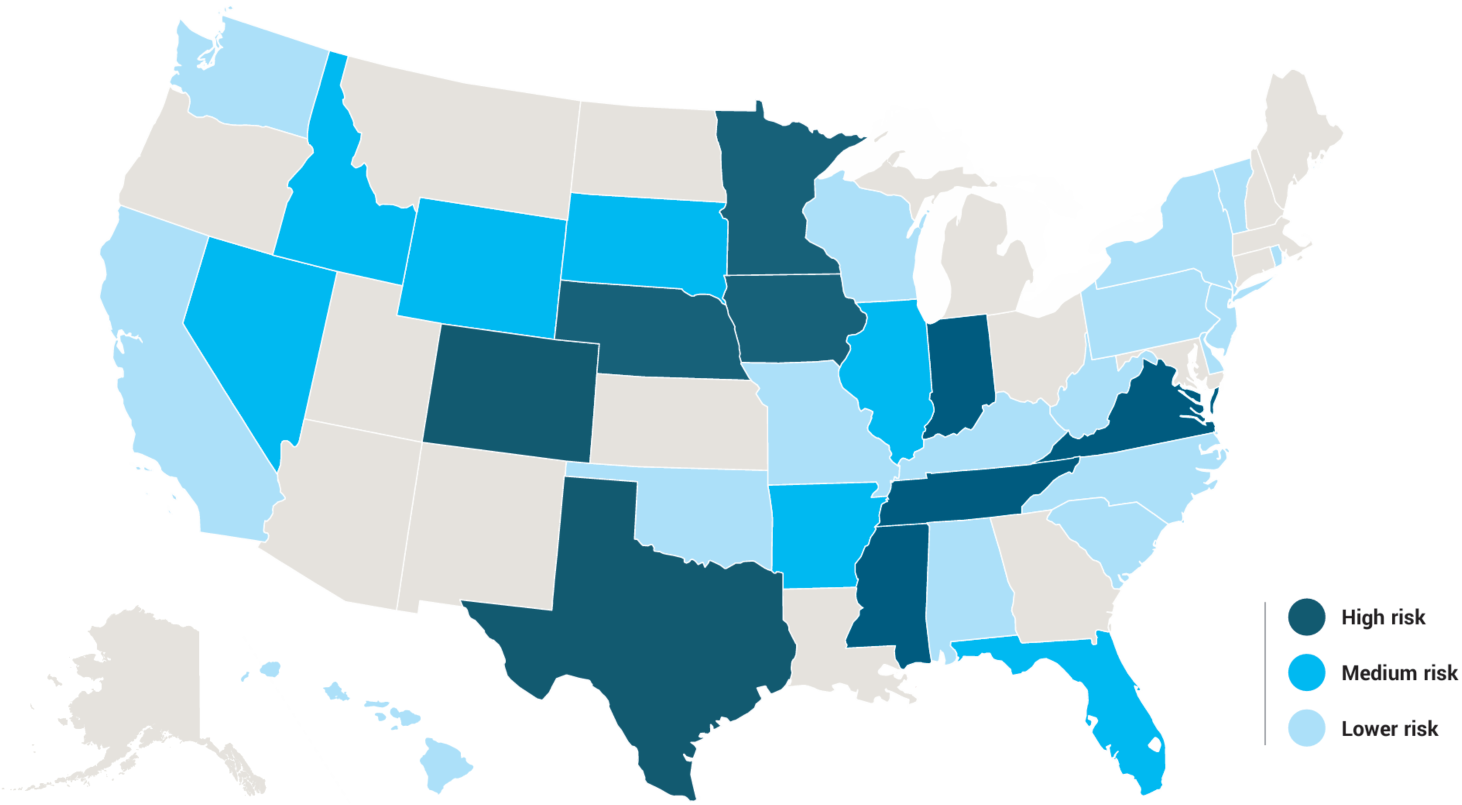
## Assessing the Risks by Location and Regulatory Environment

The heat map below visualizes risk levels across U.S. states, based on:

1. State legislation (e.g. working age, hours, permits, hazardous industries, penalties, and transparency)
2. Child labor violations confirmed through enforcement action by the U.S. Department of Labor
3. Data center investment, including active and planned construction

Companies should pay particular attention to the risk of child labor in **Colorado, Indiana, Iowa, Minnesota, Mississippi, Nebraska, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia.** These states act as inflection points of weak protection for children alongside rapid investment in data center construction. This mapping is intended for use by companies as a starting point to inform risk assessments. Companies should still conduct due diligence across all U.S. states where they have direct or indirect operations.

# RISK BY LOCATION



## Updating Policies and Procedures

Companies commissioning AI data centers in the U.S. should explicitly incorporate into their domestic codes of conduct:

- Prohibition of employing children in hazardous occupations as defined by the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), including electrical work, roofing, excavation, and power-driven equipment
- Clear age verification protocols for construction and industrial roles
- Restrictions on hours for workers under 18
- Mandatory compliance by subcontractors and staffing agencies
- Prohibition of labor recruitment fee practices
- Clear and accessible grievance mechanisms
- Escalation protocols when age documentation is inconsistent