



Paid Sick Days Are Good for Children's Health

More than 94 million working people do not have a single paid sick day to use to care for a sick child. Low-income parents are even less likely to have paid sick days.

- When parents have no choice but to send sick children to school, the health of other children, teachers and child care providers are put at risk.¹ The effects are similar to having sick adults at work: increased contagion and higher rates of infection for all.

Children inevitably get sick and need to be cared for by a parent or guardian.

- Younger children in particular need parental care and supervision when they are sick, and sick children of all ages need parents to administer medicine and take them to medical appointments.
- Most child care facilities have policies requiring sick children to stay home. The American Academy of Pediatrics has established specific exclusion criteria for sick children and identified 28 symptoms and illnesses that necessitate exclusion of children.²
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend keeping children home from school for 24 hours after their fevers have subsided to prevent the spread of illnesses like the flu.³

Without access to paid time off—the primary factor in a parent's decision to stay home with a sick child—many parents don't have the option of staying home or even taking their child to the doctor.

- Working parents with paid sick time or paid vacation days are five times more likely to stay home to care for their sick children than those without paid time off.⁴
- With paid sick days, parents are able to take their children to well-child visits and for immunizations, which may prevent serious illnesses.⁵

Studies show that children recover faster when cared for by their parents.

- The mere presence of parents shortens a child's hospital stay by 31%⁶, reducing health care costs.⁷ Active parental involvement in children's hospital care may head off future health care needs, partly due to increased parental education and awareness.⁸

Working parents need a basic workplace standard of paid sick days so they don't have to choose between keeping their job and caring for their children's health.

- Currently, no state or federal law guarantees paid sick days—although paid sick days campaigns in a dozen states across the country are mobilizing in support of this basic workplace standard.
- Paid sick days legislation in Colorado would allow workers to earn up to nine paid sick days a year to recover from illness, care for a sick family member or attend medical appointments.

¹ Vicky Lovell, *No Time to be Sick*, 2004.

² Bhatta R, Farhang L, Heller J, Capozza K, Melendez J, Gilhuly K, Firestein N. *A Health Impact Assessment of the California Healthy Families, Healthy Workplaces Act of 2008*. Oakland, California: Human Impact Partners and San Francisco Department of Public Health. July 2008.

³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *The Flu*, cdc.gov/flu/professionals/flugallery/2007-08/text/parents_guide_508.rtf.

⁴ Jody Heymann, *Forgotten Families: Ending the Growing Crisis Confronting Children and Working Parents in the Global Economy*, 2006.

⁵ Vicky Lovell, *No Time to be Sick*.

⁶ Jody Heymann, *The Widening Gap: Why America's Working Families Are in Jeopardy—and What Can Be Done About It*, Basic Books, 2000.

⁷ S.J. Heymann, Alison Earle, and Brian Egleston, 1996, as cited in Lovell, *Paid Sick Days Improve Public Health by Reducing the Spread of Disease*, 2006.

⁸ Palmer, 1993, as cited in Lovell, *No Time to be Sick*, 2004.