



Workers Caring for Older Relatives Need Paid Sick Days

Despite the importance of care giving to the health and well-being of our nation's older people, caregivers face serious economic challenges, especially without paid sick days.

- Care giving, especially among seniors with multiple chronic conditions, plays a leading role in helping delay or prevent the use of nursing home care, and reduces the chance that seniors will need skilled nursing or home health care.¹
- Half of working people (48%) don't have a single paid sick day to care for themselves, let alone their family members. Among caregivers, 37% reported that they had to quit work or reduce their hours because of their care giving responsibilities.²

Nationwide, 34 million people provide care for older family members. Care giving takes a financial toll on working people, especially when they have to take unpaid time off from work.

- Over 34 million caregivers provide assistance at the weekly equivalent of a part time job (more than 21 hours), and the estimated economic value of this support is roughly equal to \$350 billion.³
- Adults with household incomes of less than \$25,000 a year provide an average of 41 hours of care per week. By comparison, adults with household incomes of more than \$75,000 a year provide up to 24 hours of care per week.⁴
- Among caregivers, 98% reported spending on average \$5,531 a year, or 10% of their salary, for out-of-pocket expenses.⁵

As Baby Boomers retire, more working families will be providing care for elderly parents. And, as caregivers age, they need paid time off for their own health reasons, in addition to their care giving responsibilities.

- Half of the labor force will be caregivers within the next five years.⁶
- The typical caregiver, in a 2004 survey, was a 46-year old woman with some college experience who provided more than 20 hours of care each week to her mother.
- Nearly six in ten caregivers (59%) between 50 and 64 years are currently employed.⁷ Many of these workers require time away from work to care for their own health as well.

Working people need a basic workplace standard of paid sick days so they don't have to choose between keeping their job and caring for an ill parent or elderly relative.

- 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 Berkely Media Studies Group, "Making the Case For Paid Family Leave," 2003. www.paidfamilyleave.org/pdf/dorfman.pdf.

² National Alliance for Caregiving, Evercare® Study of Family Caregivers – What They Spend, What They Sacrifice, www.caregiving.org/data/Evercare_NAC_CaregiverCostStudyFINAL20111907.pdf, 2007.

³ Gibson, Mary Jo and Houser, Ari, "Valuing the Invaluable: A New Look at the Economic Value of Family Caregiving." AARP, June 2007.

⁴ National Alliance for Caregiving, Evercare® Study of Family Caregivers – What They Spend, What They Sacrifice, www.caregiving.org/data/Evercare_NAC_CaregiverCostStudyFINAL20111907.pdf, 2007.

⁵ Jane Gross, "Study Finds Higher Costs for Caregivers of Elderly," New York Times, 11/19/07.

⁶ AARP, How Employers Can Support Working Caregivers, www.aarp.org/money/careers/employerresourcecenter/retention/how_employers_can_support_working_caregivers.html.

⁷ National Alliance for Caregiving/AARP, Caregiving in the U.S. NAC/AARP, 2004.