



## Working Women Need Paid Sick Days

**Nearly half (47%) of working women in the private sector—nearly 21 million—are not able to take a paid sick day when they are ill.<sup>1</sup>**

- Low-wage workers—the majority of whom are women—are less likely to have paid sick days. More than half (59%) of minimum wage workers are women.<sup>2</sup>
- The industries that employ the most women—retail trade, accommodations and food service—are the *least likely* to offer paid sick days. Half (55%) of retail workers and three-fourths (78%) of accommodations and food service workers are without paid sick days.<sup>3</sup>

**Working women are more likely to have significant family care giving responsibilities, including caring for elderly parents, children or ill partners and spouses. As a result, women are left with no choice but to forego pay in order to meet their family's health care responsibilities.**

- One in three working women report that they provide care for an elderly relative, for persons with disabilities or for special needs children.<sup>4</sup>
- Nearly three in four women (71%) with children under 18 years of age are in the labor force. And, 76% of African American women, 67% of Asian American women and 61% of Latinas with children under 18 are in the labor force.<sup>5</sup>
- Four in five mothers (80%) are primarily responsible for selecting their children's doctors and accompanying children to appointments.<sup>6</sup>

**Women often lose pay or risk losing their jobs to care for a sick child, and low-wage working women are the most likely to financially suffer.**

- Half of working mothers miss work when their child gets sick. And of these mothers, half do not get paid when they take this time off. Among low-income working mothers, two in three report losing pay.<sup>7</sup>
- Being female doubles the chance of experiencing job loss because of family illness.<sup>8</sup>
- One in eight women (13%) and one in five women with children (20%) reported that they or a family member had been fired or disciplined by an employer for taking time off to cope with an illness or care for a sick child or family member.<sup>9</sup>

**Working women need a basic workplace standard of paid sick days so they don't have to choose between keeping their job and caring for a sick child or an ailing parent.**

- 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.

<sup>1</sup> Vicky Lovell, Institute for Women's Policy Research, *Women and Paid Sick Days: Crucial for Family Well-Being*, 2007.

<sup>2</sup> Economic Policy Institute, *Minimum Wage Issue Guide*, 2007, [www.epi.org/content.cfm/issueguides\\_minwage](http://www.epi.org/content.cfm/issueguides_minwage).

<sup>3</sup> Vicky Lovell, Institute for Women's Policy Research, *Women and Paid Sick Days: Crucial for Family Well-Being*, 2007.

<sup>4</sup> Jody Heymann, *The Widening Gap: Why America's Working Families Are in Jeopardy—and What Can Be Done About It*, Basic Books, 2000.

<sup>5</sup> Women in the Labor Force: A Databook (2007 Edition), [www.bls.gov/cps/wlf-databook2007.htm](http://www.bls.gov/cps/wlf-databook2007.htm).

<sup>6</sup> Salganicoff, Ranji, and Wyn, *Women and Health Care: A National Profile*, 2005, as cited in Lovell, 2007.

<sup>7</sup> Kaiser Family Foundation, "Women, Work and Family Health: A Balancing Act," Issue Brief, April 2003.

<sup>8</sup> Spilerman and Schrank, *Responses to the intrusion of family responses in the workplace*, *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility*, 10, 27-61, 1991.

<sup>9</sup> Lake Research Partners telephone survey of 1,200 likely voters nationwide (2.8% margin of error), conducted 6/20 – 6/27/2007.