



the work and family legal center

80 Maiden Lane, Suite 606, New York, NY 10038 | t: 212.430.5982 | f: 212.430.5983 | info@abetterbalance.org | abetterbalance.org

FACT SHEET:

Paid Sick Time

Paid sick time should be a basic employment right — but in the United States, it is not.

- 163 countries around the world guarantee paid sick leave, but not the United States.¹
- Nationally, nearly forty percent of private sector workers lack paid sick time.² Others cannot take time off from work to care for sick children, forcing them to decide between sending a sick child to school or losing critical wages (or even a job).³
- Low-income workers are significantly less likely to have paid sick time than other members of the workforce. Nationally, 80 percent of the lowest-income workers have no access to paid sick time.⁴
- In this difficult economy, it is essential that families have job security. Workers should not have to worry about losing their jobs because they are sick.

It is critical that workers have paid sick leave to care for family members.

- Paid sick time allows parents to provide personal care for their sick children. Parental care makes children's recoveries faster and can prevent future health problems.⁵
- When parents don't have paid sick time, they are more than twice as likely as parents with paid sick time to send a sick child to school or daycare,⁶ spreading illness, and five times as likely to report taking their child or a family member to the emergency room because they were unable to take time off work during normal work hours.⁷ Emergency room visits increase healthcare costs on taxpayers.

Lack of paid sick leave is a public health issue.

- Paid sick time will reduce recovery time and decrease the likelihood of spreading illness to other members of the workforce and to the public.⁸ During the H1N1 flu pandemic of 2009, researchers estimate that 5 million cases of the flu would have been prevented if a federal law providing paid sick time had been in place.⁹
- Paid sick time will also reduce health care expenditures. Nationally, providing all workers with paid sick time would reduce visits to hospital emergency departments and save \$1 billion per year in medical costs, including more than \$500 million in savings to publicly funded health insurance programs such as Medicare, Medicaid, and SCHIP.¹⁰
- As baby boomers age, more and more elderly individuals will need support from family caregivers to lead healthy, independent lives. Paid sick time allows employees to take off work in order to care for an elderly family member, including taking the individual to a doctor's appointment or providing care during a health emergency.

Paid sick leave is good for business.

- Providing paid sick time is good for a company's bottom line. Researchers estimate that the total cost of "presenteeism," where employees go to work sick and are less productive, is more than \$150 billion per year.¹¹ Sick workers also spread disease to their co-workers.
- Paid sick time results in reduced voluntary and involuntary turnover.¹² It costs an employer 150% of a salaried employee's yearly salary to replace him or her. For an hourly employee, turnover costs the employer anywhere from 50 to 75 percent of the employee's annual pay.¹³
- Since enacting a paid sick time law in 2007, San Francisco has performed better than surrounding counties in terms of total employment, disproving critics' predictions.¹⁴
- Ensuring that all employers provide paid sick time levels the playing field for employers who already provide this benefit.

There is overwhelming public support for requiring employers to provide paid sick leave.

- In a recent survey, 86% of Americans favored a law calling for up to 7 paid sick days per year for all workers.¹⁵ Additionally, 47% of Americans indicated that they would be more likely to vote for a candidate backing paid sick time, while only 14% said it would make them less likely to vote for the candidate.¹⁶
- Polls repeatedly show that paid sick time draws support across party lines. Republicans, Democrats, and Independents in Connecticut all favored the new paid sick time law in the state.¹⁷ New Yorkers across the political spectrum also favor a New York City paid sick time law.¹⁸

THE TIME IS NOW FOR ACTION.

On the Federal level, the Healthy Families Act in Congress would require employers to provide 7 days of sick leave to many employees who do not have that leave now.¹⁹ While advocates continue to push national reform, there is significant momentum for paid sick time legislation at the state and local levels as well.

In light of the importance of the issue, state and local action is crucial.

- San Francisco, Washington, D.C., Milwaukee, Connecticut, Philadelphia, and Seattle have all passed paid sick time legislation in some form.
- State and local campaigns are sprouting up all around the country.²⁰ Get involved today!

For more information or to get involved in a state or local campaign please contact A Better Balance at 212-430-5982 or info@abetterbalance.org or visit our website at www.abetterbalance.org.

¹ Jody Heymann, *If Companies Really Mean Business on Work and Family Issues...*, (May 6, 2010) Huffington Post, available at: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dr-jody-heyman/if-companies-really-mean_b_566184.html.

² U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), *Employee Benefits Survey. Leave benefits: Access, private industry workers, National Compensation Survey*, (March 2011) available at: <http://www.bls.gov/ncs/ebs/benefits/2011/ownership/private/table21a.htm>.

³ Vicky Lovell, *Women and Paid Sick Days: Crucial for Family Well-Being*, (February 2007), Institute for Women's Policy Research, available at: <http://www.iwpr.org/publications/pubs/women-and-paid-sick-days-crucial-for-family-well-being>.

⁴ BLS, *Employee Benefits Survey. Leave benefits: Access, private industry workers, National Compensation Survey*.

⁵ Jody Heymann, *The Widening Gap: Why America's Working Families Are in Jeopardy—and What Can Be Done About It*. New York, NY: Basic Books (October 15, 2001).

⁶ Tom W. Smith & Jibum Kim, *Paid Sick Days: Attitudes and Experiences*, National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago for the Public Welfare Foundation (June 2010), pg. 2, available at: <http://www.publicwelfare.org/resources/DocFiles/psd2010final.pdf>. Unpublished calculation.

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ Vicky Lovell, *Paid Sick Days Improve Public Health by Reducing the Spread of Disease*, Institute for Women's Policy Research, (February 2006) available at: <http://www.iwpr.org/publications/pubs/paid-sick-days-improve-public-health-by-reducing-the-spread-of-disease>.

⁹ Supriya Kumar, et al., *The Impact of Workplace Policies and Other Social Factors on Self-Reported Influenza-Like Illness Incidence During the 2009 H1N1 Pandemic*, (November 17, 2011) Amer. J. Pub. Health e1, published online ahead of print, available at: http://www.cdc.gov/phpr/documents/science/AJPH_2011_300307v1.pdf.

¹⁰ Institute for Women's Policy Research, *Access to Paid Sick Days Would Reduce Health Costs*, (July 2011) available at: <http://www.iwpr.org/press-room/press-releases/access-to-paid-sick-days-would-reduce-health-costs-1>.

¹¹ Paul Hemp, *Presenteeism: At Work—But Out of It*, (October 2004), Harv. Bus. Rev., pg. 3, available at: <http://www.l3ps.com/papers/Well-Med/Presenteeism-At-Work-But-Out-of-It-2004-10-HBR.pdf>.

¹² Vicky Lovell, *Valuing Good Health: An Estimate of Costs and Savings for the Healthy Families Act*, Institute for Women's Policy Research, (April 2005), pg. 8, available at: <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/site/DocServer/HFACBALovell.pdf?docID=367>.

¹³ Jodie Levin-Epstein, *Getting Punched: The Job and Family Clock: It's Time for Flexible Work for Workers of All Ages*, CLASP, (July 2006) pg. 8. Employees who quit cost their employers \$40,000 each, on average, in hiring and training expenditures. Arlie Russell Hochschild, *The Time Bind: When Work Becomes Home And Home Becomes Work*, pg. 31 (1997).

¹⁴ John Petro, *Paid Sick Leave Does Not Harm Employment*, Drum Major Institute for Public Policy, pg. 2, available at: <http://drummajorinstitute.org/pdfs/Paid%20Sick%20Leave%20Does%20Not%20Harm%20Employment.pdf>.

¹⁵ Smith & Kim, *Paid Sick Days: Attitudes and Experiences*, pg. 2.

¹⁶ *Id.* at 3.

¹⁷ Hart Research Associates, *Survey Findings on Connecticut Paid Sick Leave Law*, (August 30, 2011), available at: http://www.abetterbalance.org/web/images/stories/Documents/sickdays/factsheet/PSD_CT_Survey_Memo.pdf.

¹⁸ Jeremy Reiss and Nancy Rankin, *Sick in the City: What the Lack of Paid Leave Means for Working New Yorkers*, (October 2009), pg. 14, available at: <http://www.cssny.org/userimages/downloads/Sick%20in%20the%20City%20report%20October%202009.pdf>.

¹⁹ National Partnership for Women & Families, *The Healthy Families Act*, (May 2011), available at:

http://paysickdays.nationalpartnership.org/site/DocServer/PSD_HFA_Overview_FINAL.pdf?docID=7832.

²⁰ To learn more about the history of the local and state campaigns mentioned above and for national updates, please visit <http://www.abetterbalance.org/web/ourissues/sickleave>.