



New Jersey Time to Care Coalition

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Earned Sick Days for Low-Income Workers

Low-income working families struggle daily to meet the challenges of being both responsible family members and productive workers. Low-income workers are less likely to have employer-sponsored benefits like health insurance coverage and earned time off, including earned sick days. When illness strikes, these working women and men must face a wrenching choice: take leave to care for themselves or a sick family member and risk losing their job, or stay at work to maintain the family's economic security.

- Only 1 in 4 low-income workers have access to earned sick days, while they are precisely the workers that are least able to afford to take a day off without pay.
- 76% of food service and hotel workers don't have a single earned sick day. Workers in child care centers, retail and nursing homes also overwhelmingly lack earned sick days.ⁱ

Only about half of all workers in New Jersey have access to earned sick days for their own illness and even less (30%) are able to use an earned sick day to care for a sick child.ⁱⁱ

New Jersey should guarantee a minimum standard of Earned Sick Days for all workers. No one should have to choose between caring for themselves and loved ones and getting a paycheck!

- According to an August 2008 pollⁱⁱⁱ, 78% of Americans believe that Earned Sick Days should be a basic worker's right guaranteed by the government.
- While a number of states and cities have explored the option of guaranteeing earned sick days for their workers, there is currently no Federal law that guarantees earned sick days.
- Approximately 1.2 million workers in New Jersey (38%) do not have access to a single earned sick day. By not having earned sick days, these workers are more likely to go to work sick, putting the health of their co-workers and public at risk.^{iv}

Guaranteed earned sick days for all would promote a healthier workforce, healthier businesses and a healthier New Jersey.

- With earned sick days, workers with chronic illnesses may avoid hospitalization by managing their health through outpatient care.^v Earned Sick Days enable workers to take the time off they need for such preventative and diagnostic care, working to lower the cost of health care for NJ.
- Earned sick days minimize the spread of the flu, a highly contagious ailment that accounts for 10 to 12 percent of all illness-related work absence.^{vi}
- A 2007 study by the Society of Human Resources Management showed that employee "presenteeism" (when employees go to work sick) cost employers \$180 billion annually compared to only \$118 billion a year for employee absenteeism.^{vii}

"Providing families with time to care means strong families, strong workplaces, and strong communities."



Earned sick days will allow workers to care for their loved ones when they are sick

- Parents who have earned time off are over 5 times more likely to care for children when they are sick.
- Children get well faster when a parent cares for them. Yet, 94 million U.S. workers have no earned sick days to use to care for an ill child or other family member and, without this benefit, they cannot afford to take the time off work to care for their loved ones.

Providing earned sick days to all New Jersey workers is the right thing to do. It is also the smart thing to do. Businesses that provide earned sick days to workers to care for their own or a loved one's illness benefit from increased commitment and productivity – a win-win situation for all!

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE NJ TIME TO CARE COALITION'S EARNED SICK DAYS CAMPAIGN, CONTACT:
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ⁱHuman Impact Partners, New Jersey Time to Care and Rutgers Center for Women and Work. *A Health Impact Assessment of Paid Sick Days Policies in New Jersey*, Summary of Findings, April 2011.

ⁱⁱ Vicky Lovell, *No Time to Be Sick: Why Everyone Suffers When Workers Don't Have Paid Sick Leave*, Institute for Women's Policy Research, Washington, DC, 2004.

ⁱⁱⁱPublic Welfare Foundation, *Paid Sick Day: A Basic Labor Standard for the 21st Century*, Prepared by National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago, August 2008. Available at <http://publicwelfare.org/Aboutus/documents/PollReportFINALa.pdf>

^{iv}National Partnership for Women and Families, "*Paid Sick Days Tool Kit: In the States: New Jersey*" Available at http://www.nationalpartnership.org/site/PageServer?pagename=psd_toolkit_map_states_nj

^v Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, *Preventable Hospitalizations: Window into Primary and Preventative Care*, 2000.

^{vi} M. Keech, A.J. Scott, and P. J. J. Ryan, "The Impact of Influenza and Influenza-Like Illness on Productivity and Healthcare Resource Utilization in a Working Population," *Occupational Medicine* 48 (February 1998): 85-90.

^{vii} As cited by Weiss, Tara, "Business Basics: When Should You Call In Sick?," *Forbes.com*, February 3, 2009.

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