



New Jersey Time to Care Coalition

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Paid Sick Days for All New Jersey Workers

What are Paid Sick Days?

When workers need time to care for their own health needs and those of immediate family members, they should be provided job-protected paid time from work. It is just common sense. Currently, no federal or state law guarantees workers access to earned sick & safe days when they or their families are sick, or when they need to deal with medical, legal or relocation issues related to domestic violence or sexual assault. In New Jersey, thirteen cities and towns have approved municipal ordinances to guarantee workers in their jurisdiction the right to earn paid sick days.

Who is Affected?

Over a million workers in New Jersey do not have a single paid sick day. Many are working in low-wage service jobs. Workers without paid sick days are often those who care for our children and the elderly. They prepare and serve food in our restaurants. Without job protected paid sick days, they can't afford to stay home, even if they are sick.

- 76% of food industry workers in New Jersey do not have earned sick days.¹ The Centers for Disease Control found that more than half of all norovirus outbreaks can be traced back to sick food service workers.²
- Nearly one quarter of US adults have been fired or threatened with job loss for taking time off to recover from an illness or caring for a dependent.³ Losing a day's wages -- or worse, a job -- undermines a family's ability to contribute to the economy and forces many to rely on public programs to stay afloat.
- Parents with earned sick days are 20% less likely to send sick children to school.⁴

Why are Paid Sick Days Important?

Every family wants what's best for their children. Without access to earned sick days, many parents are forced to choose between their child's health and their family's financial stability. Earned sick days make it easier to be a good employee and a good parent. An earned sick days' policy would boost our families, our community and our economy.

- Research shows that when parents are able to care for them at home, sick children get better sooner and reduce the risk of spreading the illness to their classmates.⁵
- And when working families have enough money in their pockets to cover the basics, the whole economy gains. Losing even a day's wages – or worse, a job – undermines families' ability to contribute to the economy and forces many to rely on public programs to keep their families afloat.
- The earned sick days proposal will protect the public health. Everyone's health is at risk when people

¹ http://smlr.rutgers.edu/sites/smlr.rutgers.edu/files/documents/NJ_HIA_-_Full_ReportApril2011.pdf

² <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2014/p0603-norovirus.html>

³ <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/work-family/psd/paid-sick-days-attitudes-and-experiences.pdf>

⁴ <http://familyvaluesatwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Earned-Sick-Days-Key-Evidence-March-2016.pdf>

⁵ <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/work-family/psd/paid-sick-days-benefit-childrens-health.pdf>



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are forced to go to work sick. During the H1N1 epidemic, 7 million people caught the virus from co-workers who came to the job while sick.⁶

- For a low-income family without paid sick days, going 3.5 days without wages is equivalent to losing a month's groceries.⁷
- Businesses that provide paid sick days to workers to recover from an illness or care for a sick family member benefit from workers' increased commitment and productivity, and lower turnover costs.⁸

The Solution: *Paid Sick Days for All New Jersey Workers*

New Jersey Assembly Bill No. 2785, introduced by Assembly Speaker Vincent Prieto would guarantee New Jersey workers access to job protected paid time from work to care for their own health needs and those of immediate family members such as a spouse, civil union partner, domestic partner, child, legal ward, sibling, parent, grandparent, and grandchild.

All workers employed in New Jersey would be covered. By the same token, all employers in New Jersey would be required to provide earned sick days to employees, including small businesses. However, small businesses could be required to provide fewer earned sick days (see more below). Workers would earn paid sick days based on hours worked. This guarantees that workers who work less than full-time will still be able to earn sick days.

Key components of the bill include:

- Workers would accrue 1 hour for every 30 worked, up to a maximum of 72 hours in a calendar year for employees of businesses with 10 or more employees; and up to a maximum of 40 hours for employees of businesses with fewer than 10 employees.
- Businesses that have paid time off and vacation time policies that are provided in the same amounts and that can be used for the same purposes and under the same conditions as under the proposed earned sick days law won't have to change their policies.
- Workers start to earn sick days as soon as they begin employment, with a 90 day waiting period before they are able to use the earned days. Workers can carry-over earned sick days from year to year, but employers will not be required to provide more than the required number of hours/days in any given year.

Allowable uses of paid sick days include:

- For an employee's own mental or physical illness or for diagnostic or preventive medical care.
- For an employee's need to care for a close family member when the family member is ill or in need of diagnosis or medical care.
- To deal with medical, legal or relocation issues related to domestic violence or sexual assault.
- In the event a public official closes a school or place of business due to a public health emergency.

⁶ <https://iwpr.org/publications/sick-at-work-infected-employees-in-the-workplace-during-the-h1n1-pandemic/>

⁷ http://www.epi.org/publication/the_need_for_paid_sick_days/

⁸ <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/work-family/psd/paid-sick-days-good-for-business-and-workers.pdf>