



## **PAID SICK DAYS** *Benefits for Families*

***Paid sick leave is a valuable public health measure for families, but more than 1 million workers in Washington have no paid sick days to care for their own illness or a sick child or parent. As good public health policy, paid sick leave benefits families in these ways:***

1. **Children get well faster.** Research has shown that sick children, when cared for by a parent, have better health outcomes. Women are most often responsible for family caregiving, and with more mothers working full-time, including 55% of mothers of infants and 66% of women with children under age 6 in the workforce, paid sick leave allows them to care for their children when they are sick.
2. **Elderly parents get better care.** Nearly half of those caring for a loved one are working full time. Paid sick leave promotes better care for elderly parents by enabling caregivers to meet their family responsibilities.
3. **Family income is protected** with paid sick days.
4. **Sick workers return to full productivity more quickly** when they have paid sick days.
5. **Family health costs are lower** when families can address emergent health needs quickly.
6. **Preventive health is maintained**, like immunizations and well-baby check-ups, resulting in better health care. This is particularly important for younger children who have higher rates of illness than those that are of school age.
  - Seven well-baby check-ups per year are recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics.
  - Child care centers often require children to be symptom-free for 24 hours (one day of fever equals 2 days of missed work for parent).
  - Sick children in child care or school have the same effect of having sick adults at work: contagion and overall higher rates of infection for all the children in care.

**Most family caregiving responsibilities fall to women, but women are the least likely to have paid sick leave:**

1. Women make up 60% of part-time workers, but most part-time workers don't have paid sick days.
2. Most low-wage workers do not have paid sick leave, and women make up a majority of minimum-wage workers.
3. Three of every four poor mothers who miss work to care for sick children receive no wages while off work.
4. Being female doubles the odds of experiencing job termination related to family illness.

**What can happen if parents don't have paid sick leave?**

- They can lose their jobs.
- They can't take care of their children, parents, or spouses.
- They are forced to go on welfare.
- Their older children miss school to take care of a younger sibling.
- They lose income from taking a day off without pay. Even if they can work, they lose income if they have to hire a person to care for their child so they can go back to work.
- They leave their child home alone.
- Their children go to school or day care sick.
- They put the public at risk.