



New Jersey Time to Care Coalition
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EARNED SICK DAYS

A Fact Sheet for Working Women in New Jersey

Balancing the demands of job and family is a tremendous challenge for working women in New Jersey. As primary caregivers for their family, they struggle daily to juggle their caregiving responsibilities with their job. In order to care for a sick family member, it is sometimes necessary to take time off from work. In the absence of earned sick days, however, they increasingly find themselves torn in two directions – take the time to care for themselves or their family and risk losing their job; or go to work and risk the wellbeing of themselves or their family.

- More women with children work than ever before.
- There are more single parent households. In New Jersey, of females heading a household with no husband present, 63.4 percent had children under age eighteen living at home.ⁱ
- Research shows that children get well faster when a parent cares for them.
- Eighty percent of mothers are primarily responsible for selecting their children's doctors and accompanying children to appointments.ⁱⁱ
- Working women are twice as likely to experience a job loss because of family illness.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Parents who have paid time off are over 5 times more likely to care for children when they are sick.

In New Jersey, 1.2 million workers have no earned sick days to use to care for themselves, an ill child or other family member. Of those who do have earned sick days, less than half are able to use them to care for a family member.

Women make up the majority of workers in low-income jobs. These jobs are least likely to offer benefits such as earned sick days. In fact, only 1 in 4 low-income workers have access to earned sick days, even though they are precisely the workers that are least able to afford to take a day off without pay. For example, 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.^{iv}

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!

- 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.
- 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.^v

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



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.^{vi} 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.^{vii}
- 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.^{viii}

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 loved one’s illness benefit from increased commitment and productivity – a win-win situation for all!

**FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:
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ⁱ *NJ WomenCount -Challenge and Change: Younger and Older Women in New Jersey*. Institute for Women’s Leadership, Rutgers University,

ⁱⁱ Salganicoff, Ranji, and Wun, *Women and Health Care: A National Profile, 2005*, as cited in Vicky Lovell, Institute for Women’s Policy Research, *Women and Paid Sick Days: Crucial for Family Well-Being*, 2007.

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

^{iv} Human 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.

^v 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

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

^{vii} 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.

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

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