



Paid Sick Days: Public Health Benefits

Paid sick days are 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.

Paid sick days will improve family health:

- Access to paid sick days improves access to health care and lowering health care costs. It allows workers to get utilize preventive care and outpatient resources that help avoid costly hospitalization
- Paid sick days slow the spread of disease. The people least likely to have paid sick days are also the most likely to have high contact with the public in industries like food service, nursing homes, child care centers, and the retail industry.
- Paid sick days help protect children and workers. When sick workers and kids have the option to recover away from school and worksites, their coworkers and schoolmates are more likely to stay healthy.
- Paid sick days help protect vulnerable populations. Workers who care for the very young and elderly often have no paid sick days, exposing to infection those most vulnerable to serious complications.

Quick facts:

Food service workers: Nearly half of stomach “flu”-related outbreaks caused by the norovirus are linked to ill food service workers, who are among the least likely to have paid sick days. The Food and Drug Administration now requires that food service workers with flu-related illnesses work on a restricted basis until 24 hours after symptoms subside. But most food service operators don’t offer paid sick time, so workers are forced to work sick or take unpaid leave.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, each year more than 200,000 people are hospitalized from flu complications and about 36,000 people die from the flu. Helping workers and students to stay home while sick will ensure less people are exposed to germs, resulting in fewer serious complications and deaths.