



The Healthy Families Act

The federal Healthy Families Act of 2009 is a pending piece of federal legislation. It would guarantee seven paid sick days per year for workers at businesses with 15 or more employees. Sick days could be used to recover from routine illness, seek services to recover from domestic violence, or care for a sick family member or person whose close relationship is equivalent to that of a family member.

Eligibility

- **Earned Benefits:** Provides workers with up to seven job-protected paid sick days each year, using a simple method by which paid sick days are accrued for both employers and employees. It allows workers to earn a minimum of one hour of paid sick time for every 30 hours worked, up to 56 hours (seven days) per year, unless the employer selects a higher limit.
- **Flexible Usage:** Can be used to care for worker's own illness, preventative care or to provide care for a sick family member. Domestic violence provision allows workers to use paid sick time to recover from or seek assistance related to an incidence of domestic violence, stalking or sexual assault.

Provisions for employers:

- Employers with fewer than 15 workers are exempt.
- Employer may require certification if the employee uses more than three paid sick days in a row. For victims of domestic violence, the certification may be from a law enforcement officer or victim advocate.
- Employers with existing paid sick days policies that meet the minimums set in the Healthy Families Act (for time, types of use, method of use) are not affected.

Quick Facts

- **Nearly half (48%) of private-sector workers don't have a single paid sick day** to care for themselves when they are ill. Although a dozen states around the country are considering paid sick days initiatives this year, currently, no state or federal law guarantees paid sick days.
- **Only one in four low-wage workers have paid sick days**, and they are often most likely to have jobs requiring frequent contact with the public. For example, only one in five food service or hotel workers have any paid sick days. Child care, retail and nursing home workers are also less likely to have paid sick days.
- **Children get well faster when a parent cares for them.** Yet, 94 million working people don't have paid sick days to care for an ill child—and cannot afford to take time off without pay. As a result, children are forced to go to school sick.
- **Working people with paid sick days are more productive** and less likely to leave their job, which saves businesses money by reducing turnover. If workers were provided just seven paid sick days per year, our national economy would experience a net savings of \$8.1 billion per year.
- **Paid time off to address the effects of domestic violence helps victims keep their jobs** and maintain their financial stability. According to the General Accounting Office, 25 to 50 percent of domestic violence victims report losing a job due, at least in part, to domestic violence.