



Women need paid sick days and family leave

Raising Women's Voices has worked tirelessly to achieve quality, affordable health insurance coverage for women and our families. As we strive to make sure the new health reform law delivers what it promises, we are considering some new questions:

- What good is having health coverage if we can't get time off from work to go to the doctor, recover from illness or take our kids to the doctor?
- Now that women will be guaranteed maternity coverage through our health plans, shouldn't we be fighting for paid family leave that will allow us to spend those crucial early weeks with our newborn babies?
- How can we care for ailing members of our families if we don't have paid family leave?

That's why RWV-NY is supporting proposed policies that would provide New York workers with paid sick days and paid family leave. A proposed city law would guarantee all workers within the city limits the ability to earn and use paid sick time for personal or family illness or medical appointments. A proposed state law would create a fund that would provide up to 12 weeks a year of partial wage replacement for workers who need to take time off from their jobs to care for a new child or seriously ill family member.

Our colleagues at the National Partnership for Women and Children and the Institute for Women's Policy Research have conducted extensive research about the importance of paid sick and family leave in the lives of women. Here are some of their key findings:

More than 22 million working women nationwide lack paid sick days

In the retail trade industry, 55 percent of workers have no paid sick days. It's even worse in the accommodations/food service sector, where 78 percent of workers have no paid sick days. *These two industries are the largest private-sector industries for women and employ nearly 9 million women who lack paid sick days.*¹

An estimated 27 percent of low-income women put off getting health care because they cannot take time off from work.²

Women need time for family care-giving

Working women are more likely than their male co-workers to have significant family care-giving responsibilities, including caring for elderly parents, children or ill partners and spouses. Without paid sick days or family leave, women are often forced to lose pay in order to meet their family's health care responsibilities.

An estimated 80 percent of mothers are primarily responsible for selecting their children's doctors and accompanying the children to appointments.³

Half of working mothers miss work when their child gets sick.

What public policies would help address these problems?

New York City: Earned Paid Sick Time Act

Employees of businesses within the city limits could earn one hour of sick time for every 30 hours worked, and begin using it after 90 days on the job.

The maximum amount of time off allowed would be 72 hours a year for workers in larger businesses (20 employees or more) and 40 hours a year for workers in smaller businesses (fewer than 20 employees)

An employee could use sick time for physical or mental illness, diagnosis or preventive care. It can also be used to care for an ill spouse, domestic partner, child, parent or grandparent. Sick time could be used if a school or business is closed due to a public health emergency.

The average cost for Earned Paid Sick Time for employers would be \$5.37 per worker per week for small businesses and \$7.94 per worker per week for large businesses.⁴

New York State: Paid Family Leave Insurance Act

This proposed policy would expand the existing state Temporary Disability Insurance (TDI) program to provide up to 12 weeks a year of partial wage replacement for workers who need to take time off from their jobs to care for a new child or seriously ill family member. As it stands now, the TDI program provides 6 to 8 weeks of wage replacement (\$170 per week) for workers with temporary disabilities or pregnancy.

¹ Vicky Lovell, Ph.D. Institute for Women's Policy Research. Women and Paid Sick Days: Crucial for Family Well-Being. February 2007.

² Ibid

³ Working Women Need Paid Sick Days, National Partnership for Women and Families

⁴ FAQ's on the New York City Earned Paid Sick Time Act. New York State Paid Leave Coalition, A Better Balance.

www.raisingwomensvoices.net

Raising Women's Voices is a collaborative initiative of the National Women's Health Network, the Avery Institute for Social Change and the MergerWatch Project.

