

FACT SHEET



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Medical professionals: support paid sick days for all

Problem: Approximately 41 percent of private sector workers, **1.2 million workers in Virginia, have no paid sick days** or any paid time off (PTO). This creates a public health crisis, forcing workers to choose between taking an unpaid day and risking the health of those around them.

Policy solution: Create a paid sick day standard to require all employers with six or more employees to provide five paid sick days (40 hours) each year for full-time workers that could be used for themselves or to care for sick family members. Part-time employees would accrue fewer paid sick hours based on hours worked. PTO policies qualify as paid sick days.

Benefits: Almost everyone benefits from a paid sick day standard, which is why 85 percent of voters say employers should offer paid sick days. Paid sick days will:

- **Reduce the spread of disease** - 81 percent of food service workers and 75 percent of child care workers have zero paid sick days. These employees work in sectors where spreading disease can be dangerous and costly.
 - Food workers who are sick with contagious diseases such as the flu or norovirus are normally required to stay home for at least 24 hours after the symptoms lessen. However, since these workers cannot afford to take time off, 60 percent of food workers reported to work while sick and half of them did so because they did not have paid sick days. In fact, 20 percent of food workers reported having worked at least one shift while experiencing vomiting or diarrhea.
 - Working parents who do not have paid sick days are more than twice as likely to send their sick child to day care or school than parents who do.

- **Increase access to preventive care** – Workers without paid sick days are less likely to access preventive care such as Pap smears, annual physicals, and cancer screenings.
 - Children who have parents with paid sick days are 13 percent more likely to receive annual checkups, routine dental care, preventive flu shots than children who do not have parents with paid sick days.
- **Reduce delayed and expensive treatments** – A study found that employees without paid sick days are 61 percent less expected to get a flu shot. Workers who do not have paid sick days also have less access to health care, making it likely that they will acquire high medical expenses than those who do have paid sick days.
 - Workers who don't have paid sick days are more than 3 times as likely to go to the emergency room because they cannot afford to seek help during business hours. Low-wage workers are likely unable to pay the high costs associated with emergency care, leaving hospitals to cover the costs.

Thirteen states have paid sick days:

Arizona, California, Connecticut, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Nevada, New Jersey, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Washington. Of the 13 states with paid sick days, nine of them rank higher than Virginia in overall health.

Sources: Family Values @ Work, National Partnership for Women & Families, United Health Foundation, and U.S Bureau of Labor & Statistics, Institute for Women's Policy Research, Big Cities Health Coalition, Center for American Progress, Center for Disease Control and Prevention