



## Working Sick: Paid Sick Days Help Prevent the Spread of Illness

*Nearly 6 million Californians – over 40% of all workers in the state – have ZERO paid sick days.*

### **A Lack of Paid Sick Days Leads to an Unhealthy Workplace**

- Sick workers can bring infectious diseases into the workplace. 87% of employers report that sick employees who show up to work are suffering from short-term illnesses such as a cold or flu, which can be easily spread to coworkers<sup>1</sup>. In fact, every ill worker with the flu infects 18% of his/her coworkers.<sup>2</sup>
- The majority of workers without paid sick days are low-wage workers who have no choice but to come to work when they are ill.
- The Centers for Disease Control recommends that workers who are ill “stay home from work and school”<sup>3</sup> to prevent the spread of disease in the workplace and community. Paid sick days enable working families to follow this advice.

### **A Lack of Paid Sick Days Creates a Dangerous Work Environment**

- Sick workers are more likely to have an accident on the job.<sup>4</sup>
- In 2005, industries with the highest incidence of occupational injury – Construction, Waste Management, Food Processing and Manufacturing – also had the largest percentage of workers without paid sick days.<sup>5</sup>

### **A Lack of Paid Sick Days Threatens the Health of Our Community**

- The risk of spreading contagion increases when ill workers have high levels of contact with the public, yet only 4% of restaurant workers have paid sick days.<sup>6</sup>
- In 2006, a Carraba’s restaurant worker who did not have paid sick days came to work with the stomach flu and infected over 364 customers in Lansing, Michigan.<sup>7</sup>
- Paid sick days reduce the spread of the flu by limiting a sick person’s contact with members of the community. Each year, 5% of Californians will get the flu and infect 18% of the people with whom they have close contact.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, paid sick days can play a critical role in protecting the health of all Californians in the event of a pandemic flu outbreak.

[Over...]

- Paid sick days can control illness in high risk settings, such as hospitals and nursing homes, where the impact of contagious disease is most acute. A study of disease outbreaks in nursing homes found that the risk of having respiratory or gastrointestinal disease outbreaks was less for nursing homes with paid employee sick days policies.<sup>9</sup>

### **It's About Time: Support Paid Sick Days in California**

Produced by **the Labor Project for Working Families** on behalf of the **Work and Family Coalition**. The Work and Family Coalition is a partnership of unions and community based organizations working on a campaign for Paid Sick Days in California to allow workers to take paid sick days for themselves or to care for a sick family member. The Coalition helped pass the groundbreaking California Paid Family Leave law. For more information, contact us at (510) 643-7088 or [info@paysickdaysca.org](mailto:info@paysickdaysca.org) or visit [www.paysickdaysCA.org](http://www.paysickdaysCA.org).

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<sup>1</sup> On the Job, But Out of It? CCH Survey, January 10, 2008, <http://www.cch.com/press/news/2008/2008011h.asp>

<sup>2</sup> Lovell, V. (2004). No Time to Be Sick: Why Everyone Suffers When Workers Don't Have Paid Sick Leave.

<sup>3</sup> Centers for Disease Control website: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

<sup>4</sup> Sorock, G.S., et al. (2004) "A case-crossover study of transient risk factors for occupational acute hand injury." *Occupational and Environmental Medicine*. 61:305-311

<sup>5</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, DOL – Paid Leave, Sick Leave.

<sup>6</sup> Institute for Women's Policy Research Fact Sheet, February 2006. "Paid Sick Days Improve Public Health by Reducing the Spread of Disease."

<sup>7</sup> Norovirus Outbreak Associated with Ill Food Service Workers – Michigan, January-February 2006. *MMWR*, 56(46);1212-1216

<sup>8</sup> See citation 3.

<sup>9</sup> Jiehui Li et al, Impact of Institution Size, Staffing Patterns, and Infection Control Practices on Communicable Disease Outbreaks in New York State Nursing Homes, *American Journal of Epidemiology* Vol. 143, No. 10: 1042-1049