

# MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS

## ON WHY PAID SICK DAYS ARE THE BEST PREVENTATIVE MEDICINE

**Dr. Joannie Y.  
Media, PA**

As a pediatrician, I see first-hand how some parents struggle to get kids to the doctor's office for necessary appointments. I see them struggling with their own health sometimes too, putting it aside to care for their kids, holding off on seeing their doctor because they don't have enough sick days for themselves. We need healthy parents to keep our kids healthy. Please give them paid sick days so they can afford to keep their family healthy!

**Dr. Susan D.  
Seattle, WA**

As a family physician for 30 years, I have personally (through my own flu illnesses) and professionally experienced the threat of job termination due to contagious illnesses. I always advocated for my patients however I could, but today sometimes the health provider is dinged for getting ill too!

**Chris M., RN  
Pflugerville, TX**

During my 30 plus years of working as a Registered Nurse, I was repeatedly discouraged from taking sick days for myself, let alone to care for a child. Working in a hospital, I spread my germs around to co-workers as well as our patients. We would continue to re-infect each other, so that a bout of the flu could hang around for months. We were looked down upon by management for properly caring for our children.

**Shelley K.  
Kirkland, WA**

I am a healthcare worker, and ironically, have no paid sick leave. So I work hard to stay well, but sometimes find myself evaluating just HOW sick I am, and what risk I might pose to my patients. I try to make the best decision possible, and wish that I had the opportunity to have an easier decision, and just stay home if I show any signs of illness.

**Dr. Kristin B.  
Austin, TX**

I'm a physician and see patients every day who return to work before they should because they have no paid sick days at work. They are often contagious and get others sick as well. We need to help these workers care for themselves and families.

**Dr. Janet H.\*  
Washington, DC**

I am a community pediatrician with enough earned sick time to cover about 6 months, but I have the unfortunate circumstance of working in an environment where calling out sick is strongly discouraged, frowned upon, and sometimes results in consequences such as working longer hours, seeing more patients upon my return to work, or experiencing inflexibility in future scheduling requests.

I have come to work with a migraine strong enough not to see or think straight, but because of pressure from hospital administration, I reported to work. Not only should paid sick days be mandatory, but there should be no consequences when we take them. \*Pseudonym

**Dr. Alison K.  
Decatur, GA**

Please, as an Infectious Disease specialist and a mom, I ask that you let people who are sick or have sick kids stay home! Otherwise, the infections spread quickly, compromise public health, and productivity is lost! Please support paid sick days! It helps all of us stay healthy and productive.



**Dr. Michele C.  
Clive, IA**

I support paid sick days as a physician and a parent. Our country cannot afford to lose our children nor our workforces. Acknowledgement and support of sick workers and their families only serves to enable loyal employees.

**Melanie C.  
Falmouth, ME**

As as an RN and childcare business owner and operator, my employees and I care for the children of many nurses, doctors and other health professionals. All of us are supportive of paid sick days.

When I used to work as a hospital nurse we were all forced to work while sick. One day, while starting an IV, my runny nose, from a fresh cold, unexpectedly dripped onto the patient's arm! I was mortified. I had to disinfect the arm and start over.

**Kathleen K.  
Annapolis, MD**

As a Registered Nurse, I am horrified that sick people can harvest my salad greens, prepare my food, contaminate my clean dishes in restaurants, and spread disease. Most people in the food industry do not have paid sick days. So they come to work sick.

**Dr. Lora S.  
Bellingham, WA**

As a physician working in a community clinic, I see people every day who have delayed care due to financial strain. Earned paid sick days are critical not only for the families who are ill, but for their communities, from a public health perspective.

**THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS  
recommends 6 well-child  
visits in the first year of  
life, 3 in the second, and  
17 from ages 2 through 21.**



**However, fewer than half of U.S. children  
are getting adequate preventive care,  
partially because over half of working  
moms can't earn a single paid sick day to  
use for these doctors visits.**

Chung, P., et al. (2006, April). Preventive Care For Children In The United States: Quality And Barriers. Annual Review of Public Health, 27, 491-515.

**Jamie M.  
Severn, MD**

As a registered nurse, it is important for me to be able to stay home from work when I'm sick in order to protect my patients. At this point in time we are penalized for doing so, but this shouldn't be the case.

**Dr. Robin D.  
Englewood, CO**

As a family physician, I regularly see the problems that come with not getting paid sick days. An illness or injury can send a family into a financial down-spiral. Too often, people go to work or have to send their children to school when it isn't safe to do so. We all benefit from paid sick days!

**Deb S., RN, LNC, CSHN, ARCN  
Carrboro, NM**

As a critical care nurse, I know first-hand what illness can do to a family. Working parents often have a struggle to balance things out in the best of times. Loss of pay due to illness can put a family on the track to welfare. That is NOT THE AMERICAN WAY!

**Bridget R.  
Carbondale, IL**

I am a trained and licensed health care professional. I do not, however, get a single day of paid time off. My son is two years old, and I have probably called in sick to work more in the last two years than all my previous working life combined! Please, help us keep up with the rest of the industrialized world and make paid sick days mandatory for all workers, regardless of the job they have!

**Stacey F.\*  
Arden, NC**

I work for a hospital in North Carolina, and upon being hired I was told that I had 4 "excused" sick days a year, all of which are unpaid. I was hired in the middle of flu season and my 3 year old had just started preschool, so, naturally, she stayed sick for a solid 3 months and I took off multiple days to stay home with her. I caught the flu and various colds from her five times, and I worked through every single episode of sickness because I was forced to save my sick days for her. Upon reaching my 4th 'excused' sick day in the year (in a 6 month period), I was pulled into my Director's office and told that I had reached my maximum number of sick days and from now on, every time I called in, I would receive a disciplinary write up. I have an above-average work ethic. I consistently perform my job above and beyond the expectations that are set before me, I am well-liked, and I am efficient.

Taking a sick day does not impact my work ethic, nor does it negatively effect anyone in my workplace. I wish I didn't have to take sick days, but when I am forced to, I not only am losing a day of work that I desperately need in order to afford our \$9,800 a year child care (the average, if not less than average,

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cost of child care in our state), but I am then looked down upon by my directors and considered 'lazy' and 'flaky'.

How is it that, if I miss work for the sake of my children and my own health, I am considered 'lazy', 'unprofessional', and 'flaky', yet, if my male coworkers missed work for the sake of their children or their own health, they are praised for it? I was told that if I missed 7 days of work in a single work year, I would be fired. This isn't personal, it's policy, and it's wrong. I care more about my child's health than I do an outdated Human Resources rule, so I guess if I or my daughter get sick again, I will be looking for another job. *\*Pseudonym*

**Veletta W.**  
**Vancouver, WA**

As a retired critical care nurse, I have seen first-hand the cost of not having paid sick days. It impacts employers financially, impacts families financially who must stay home without pay, and encourages people to return to work, and school too soon, thus spreading the disease. There is a big domino effect. Stop this domino effect.

**Dr. Julie N.**  
**Ladera Ranch, CA**

As a pediatrician, a mother and a citizen who works, I know how important it is for a parent to be able to stay home with a sick child, or to take sick days for him or herself. It is crucial for families to have the ability to earn paid sick time.

**Elizabeth S.**  
**St. Paul, MN**

I am a member of the Minnesota Nurses Association. Nurses need sick time because we care for immunocompromised, vulnerable people AND because we are exposed to sick people and myriad potential infections in the course of our work every shift.

**Lisa O., RNC-OB, MSN, CNS**  
**Silver Spring, MD**

I'm a Mom and a Maternal-Infant Clinical Nurse Specialist of over 30 years. Supporting families economically and implementing family friendly laws, builds community and strengthens the very fibers that makes our country so amazing.

**Theodore V., CNA**  
**Madison, WI**

I have been a CNA working in nursing homes full-time and part-time for the past 23 years, 22 in non-union shops, and one in a union shop. Unlike many other workers, I have always had the privilege of paid sick days. However, a very bad practice has intruded into the healthcare world over the last decade. Those of us who have paid sick days still have them but, we are penalized for using them. It works like this: Say I am sick with a contagious illness. I call in to work because I do not want to make my coworkers sick and I don't want to give my illness to my immunocompromised patients. On the one hand, I am released from responsibility for working that day

and I do get paid for it. On the other hand, they penalize me for USING my paid sick day because there is no distinction between LEGITIMATE reasons for not showing up to work, and illegitimate reasons. I can even bring in a doctor's note and that sick day will still be counted against me and if I rack up enough sick days, I will be disciplined and probably fired even though I was being conscientious, attempting not to infect my coworkers and patients.

**Dr. Grainne M.**  
**Orange, CA**

As a family physician working at a clinic that cares for hard-working low-income patients, I see the need for paid sick days close-up every day and really hope that you support it.

**Deborah M, RN**  
**Edgewood, WA**

As an RN and a mom, I have seen the effects of children who are being sent to school sick, but medicated to hide the symptoms because their parents don't have any paid sick days. This doesn't have to keep happening.

**Marian P.**  
**Winona, MN**

Working full time in a Minnesota hospital as a Registered Nurse, I'm only allowed 3 sick days per year. I pay for them using my PTO and accrue other PTO time throughout the year for vacation. I think it is unfortunate that all year I'm supposed to only use 3 days for myself and a young family of four. Working in an emergency room, I have high exposure to illness and it is very important as a caregiver to not be ill while caring for others.

**Dr. Geneve A.**  
**Melrose, MA**

As an infectious diseases specialist and mom, I know paid sick days make economic and medical sense. Let's spread commonsense and not germs!

**Dr. Ann J.**  
**Tucson, AZ**

As a Pediatrician, I know the importance of allowing sick people time off to rest at home and prevent their illness from infecting other people at work. I am in support of paid sick days for this and many other reasons.

**Kimberley B.**  
**Denver, CO**

I'm a nurse (LPN). My employer does not give us paid sick days, so I have to go to work even when I have a cold.

**Jean A.**  
**Orlando, FL**

A nurse's aide I know was pressured into finishing her shift while she was having a heart attack. She was having standard symptoms soon after her shift started and her nurse supervisor still required her to stay.

***Diana N.  
San Francisco, CA***

As a medical social worker, I see everyday in my work with patients just how crucial it is to have paid sick days for all workers.

***Suzanna K.  
Santa Cruz, CA***

As a primary care Physician Assistant, I have direct experience witnessing both the public health consequences and the economic consequences of the lack of paid sick days my patients have.

***Dr. Doertlis S.  
Berkeley, CA***

As a primary care doctor taking time right now to be home and recover from an illness, not worrying about losing my job or pay, I think paid sick days are absolutely needed for good preventive medicine.

***Wanda T.  
Annandale, MN***

I work in health care and can lose my job if I need to stay home sick. Therefore, I go to work and take the risk.

***Rochelle W., NP  
Ashland, OR***

At my workplace, which is a healthcare provider, presentee-ism (sick employees at work) is a significant threat to some of our fragile patients! We all need paid sick days.

***Carla K, RN  
Tomah, WI***

I am an RN, and we are required to be at work, regardless of health. This is not safe for patients or other workers. Of course, we don't get breaks, either, although we get docked for them!

***Barbara M.  
Schaumburg, IL***

As a nurse, I want to add an extra vote of support for paid sick days. People spreading bacteria & viruses in restaurants & work places is a serious public health threat.

***Claire H.  
Chapel Hill, NC***

I am a neonatal RN in an ICU. I know firsthand how important paid sick days are. Please support them!

***Debra P.  
Hoboken, NJ***

As a health disparities researcher, I have seen countless cases in which people forced themselves to work when ill because they don't have paid sick days, and lost hours and even were fired when they took time to attend medical appointments.

***Dr. Bina F  
Williamsburg, VA***

As a pediatrician, I see first-hand the struggle it is for working parents to take care of their sick children and themselves and still be in a steady job. They need help maintaining a healthy balance.