

Paid Sick Days Will Improve the Health of All Texas Residents



A recent study by medical students at the University of Texas-Austin affirmed that paid sick days can reduce public health risks, allow workers to heal more quickly and care for their loved ones when they are sick, and reduce health care costs. Below are some of the key findings, along with stories from Austin workers shared in an in-depth focus group.

Paid sick days can reduce transmission of the flu and other ailments:

More than a third of flu cases are transmitted in schools and workplaces.

- During the 2009 swine flu pandemic, about 5 million additional people got infected as a result of a co-worker who did not stay at home when they were infected with the flu. This resulted in more than 20,000 unnecessary hospitalizations and over 1,300 unexpected deaths.¹
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends people “stay home from work, school, and errands when you are sick.”²
- During the flu season, absences of K-12 students in Central Texas peaked to an average of 350 a day.³ Ninety percent of the 2.4 million student absences per year are due to a health condition; 62% involve low income students. Yet only one-third of workers in the lowest income have paid sick days.⁴

“I’m a single mom of 2 kids, ages 8 and 9. I got sick, then the kids did. My boss said, ‘If you keep missing work, you’re not going to have a job.’ So I had expenses that week of the doctor, medications and 3 days that I didn’t go to work – and the threats about being fired.”

Construction worker

“I got sick and would get fired if I didn’t come in. I am a chef. We were preparing food with our bare hands. I washed my hands all the time, but that’s not good. I didn’t miss work because I didn’t want to get fired. We don’t have paid sick days or anything like that.”

Chef

Paid sick days will make restaurants safer:

The data shows that foodborne illnesses can be limited if industry workers had better paid sick leave benefits.⁵

Paid sick days will reduce the likelihood of outbreaks of stomach flu in nursing homes

A study found that the respiratory and gastrointestinal disease outbreak risk is significantly lower in nursing homes with paid sick day policies.⁶

“I was working at a restaurant from 5-10 am. I [got sick.] You have to go to work every day. If it was contagious, I would have gotten co-workers sick – it could have been an epidemic.”

Restaurant worker

Workers with paid sick time can get treatment and heal with fewer complications.

Workers with paid-sick leave are less likely to seek care in emergency rooms⁷ and less likely to develop complications from untreated illness.⁸

Paid sick time helps prevent work injuries.

Studies have found that paid sick leave helps lower unintentional work-related injuries significantly. Workers with paid sick leave are 21% to 35% less likely to endure a non-fatal injury at work.⁹

"I worked there two years and every day I was so close to committing suicide or being hospitalized, every day. Not having paid sick days contributed to that."

Retail worker

Those with access to paid sick days are more likely to receive preventive care

They are also more likely to have preventive health interventions¹⁰, such as colon and breast cancer screenings, and lower levels of psychological distress.¹¹

Paid sick days reduce health care costs

Outbreaks of contagious diseases, such as influenza, can overwhelm an already fragile healthcare system and substantially reduce the nation's gross annual product. Offering paid sick leave to all workers could reduce emergency care cost to the tune of 1 billion dollars per year.¹²

Paid sick days can lead to a decrease in mortality.

Paid sick leave is associated with a significant decrease of 22% in overall mortality at 4.5 years. Mortality rates are higher among workers without paid sick leave because they delay emergent medical care as they face a tough choice between calling in sick and going with no pay, which not only jeopardizes their livelihood but also their job security¹³.

For more information, contact Working Texans for Paid Sick Time, <http://working-texans.org/>

ENDNOTES:

¹ Kumar S, Quinn SC, Kim KH, Daniel LH, Freimuth VS. The Impact of Workplace Policies and Other Social Factors on Self-Reported Influenza-like Illness During the 2009 H1N1 Pandemic. Am J Public Health. 2012;102(1):134-140.

² <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/habits/index.htm>

³ Wiseman A and Childs J. Why are Students Absent and What Can We Do About It? E3 Alliance Education Equal Economics. Available at https://e3alliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Absence-Reasons-Study-Presentation_10.16.17.pdf.

⁴ Asfaw A, Pana-Cryan R and Rosa R. Paid Sick Leave and Nonfatal Occupational Injuries. Am J Public Health. 2012;102: e59-e64

⁵ Hsuan C, Ryan-Ibarra S, DeBurgh K, Jacobson DM. Association of Paid Sick Leave Laws and Foodborne Illness Rates. Am J Prev Med. 2017;53(5): 609-615

⁶ Wiedera, E, Chang A. and Chen H Presenteeism a Public Health Hazard. Journal of General Internal Medicine 2010 Nov; 25(11): 1244-1247

⁷ Bhuyan SS, Wang Y, Bhatt J, Dismuke SE, Carlton EL, Gentry D, LaGrange C, Chang CF. Paid Sick Leave is Associated with Fewer ED Visits Among US Private Sector Working Adults. Am J Emerg Med. 2016;34(5):784-9.

⁸ Ziebarth N. Fighting the Flu: Paid Sick Leave Reduces Infection Rates. Available at: <https://www.newswise.com/articles/fighting-the-flu-paid-sick-leave-reduces-infection-rates>.

⁹ Asfaw A, Pana-Cryan R and Rosa R. Paid Sick Leave and Nonfatal Occupational Injuries. Am J Public Health. 2012;102: e59-e64.

¹⁰ DeRigne, L.; Stoddard-Dare, P.; Quinn, L. Workers without paid sick leave less likely to take time off for illness or injury compared to those with paid sick leave. Health Aff. 2016, 35, 520-527.

¹¹ Stoddard-Dare P, DeRigne L, Collins CC, Quinn LM and Fuller K. Paid Sick Leave and Psychological Distress: An Analysis of US Workers. Am J Orthopsychiatry. 2017 Sept 14. Doi: 10.1037/ort0000293.

¹² Bhuyan SS, Wang Y, Bhatt J, Dismuke SE, Carlton EL, Gentry D, LaGrange C, Chang CF. Paid Sick Leave is Associated with Fewer ED Visits Among US Private Sector Working Adults. Am J Emerg Med. 2016;34(5):784-9.

¹³ Kim D. Paid Sick Leave and Risks of All-Cause and Cause-Specific Mortality Among Adult Workers in the USA. Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health. 2017;14:1247.

"I deliver documents. I really can't afford to get sick. If you decide you don't want to work, that's cool – just don't come back. A month ago, my shoulder was quite sore. It would have been nice to recuperate, but nah, just take some aspirin and get back to it."

Bike Messenger

