

# No Sick Days? That's bad for your physical and mental health!

Yasmin Cruz

**NOTE:** For a more accessible version of this article, read the picture story at the bottom of pp. 6-7.

## No One Is Exempt from Getting Sick

Why do so few people get paid sick days? Everyone is entitled to sick days no matter where they are from or where they work. It is inhumane that we don't have a federal law that requires companies to offer sick time. No one is exempt from getting sick, and with Covid-19, we can clearly see the cost of not having access to sick time. We should also be able to get paid time off to take care of our loved ones. Paid sick days are necessary for our physical and mental health.

Every year, millions of Americans get sick from all sorts of illnesses. The CDC estimates that since 2010, the flu alone has resulted in between 9.3 million and 45 million illnesses each year in the United States. In 2020, 15 million



Pavil Danilyuk, pexels.com

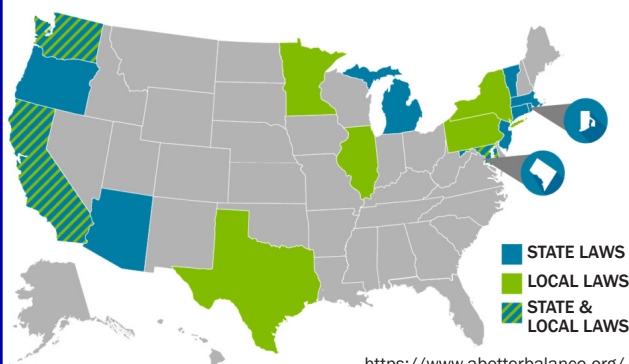
people tested positive for the coronavirus. Now imagine how many *more* people will get Covid-19 because people who have it don't take sick days! There has to be some sympathy for the life of each individual and more understanding that if you come to work sick, you make other people sick.

## No Paid Leave = More Distress

Studies have shown that when workers don't have paid sick leave, they feel more mental distress. "That distress interferes a lot with their life and activities," says Patricia Stoddard-Dare, a

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### States with Paid Sick Time Laws



Why do so few people get paid sick days? It is not humane! Paid sick days are necessary for our physical and mental health.

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<https://welcomemages.org/>

If we don't have paid sick days, we might go to work while we are sick. Then we make other people sick.

professor at Cleveland State University. Stoddard-Dare and her colleagues found that workers without paid sick leave report a higher level of psychological distress. They are more likely to report that their distress interferes “a lot” with their daily life and activities compared to workers with paid sick leave. The people who are most vulnerable to this distress are people who are young, have low incomes, and have less education.

I can attest to what the research says. I used to work for a company that did not provide me with any health insurance or paid time off. My shift was from 3:00 pm to midnight, and many times it would extend to 1:00 am. Knowing that this was my only option to survive was very stressful to me. I worked as hard, if not harder, than those who did have the privilege of receiving such benefits. Why should one person be treated so differently from another because of their lot in life: their sex, their education, or their race?

Everyone should have a choice to remain home with pay if it is for their own and others’ well-being. It may just be that they need to care for loved ones or that they need some time for their own mental health. Without paid sick leave, the physical health and mental health of working people is at great risk. We need a federal law requiring paid sick leave for all!

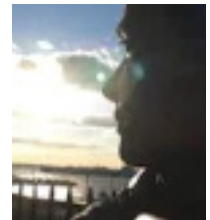
## Family Medical Leave

There is no federal law that guarantees paid sick leave. However, in 1994, after people put a lot of pressure on their elected officials, the government passed the Family Medical Leave Act. Research this law to find out what it covers. Are you interested in supporting legislation that would amplify workers’ rights to sick leave? Visit <https://www.nationalpartnership.org/support-us/take-action.html>.

**AFTER YOU READ:** According to the author, how would it help to have paid sick days?

**Sources:** <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/burden/index.html>; <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/>; [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/paid-sick-leave-mental-health\\_n\\_59c16c23e4b087fdf508b719](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/paid-sick-leave-mental-health_n_59c16c23e4b087fdf508b719); <https://www.sciencedaily.com/>.

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We have children who sometimes get sick. We need paid time off to take care of our loved ones.

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When we don't have paid sick time, everyone suffers. The U.S. should have a federal law that gives workers paid sick time.