

Survivors of Domestic and Sexual Violence Need Paid “Safe Days”

OCTOBER 2015

Incidents of domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking are tragically common, yet our nation’s workplace policies do not reflect this reality. Nearly 20 million women and men suffer from domestic violence, sexual violence or stalking by intimate partners every year in the United States.¹ This violence results in nearly two million injuries and nearly 1,300 deaths.² **It is past time for a national paid sick and safe days standard that provides survivors the support and job stability they need.**

Survivors’ Need for Paid Safe Days is Clear

Domestic violence survivors often need to take time away from their jobs to seek assistance and leave their abusers. A paid sick and safe days standard would keep survivors who are seeking help from being forced to risk their jobs and financial security.

- ▶ **Paid safe days protect survivors’ jobs when they seek help – a particularly important protection for low-wage workers who can’t afford to take unpaid days off.**
 - ▶ Each year, victims of severe domestic violence are forced to miss nearly eight million days of paid work.³ Women who experience intimate partner violence work, on average, three months less than women who do not experience intimate partner violence, which negatively affects long-term job stability and economic well-being.⁴
 - ▶ Low-wage workers in particular often don’t have the time they need to access medical care, contact the appropriate authorities, or obtain a protective order when they experience violence.⁵ Only 22 percent of private sector workers who are paid \$9.00 or less an hour have access to paid sick days, and only 40 percent have access to paid vacation days.⁶
- ▶ **Paid safe days help give survivors the financial stability they need to seek safety and continue working.**
 - ▶ Survivors of domestic violence are at an increased risk of harm shortly after separating from an abusive partner.⁷ It is essential that they are able to find shelter, file restraining orders, attend court dates or receive counseling to prevent further abuse and work disruption.
 - ▶ The loss of employment can be particularly devastating for domestic violence survivors because they often need financial security to ensure their safety and the safety of their children. Survivors of domestic violence often stay with their abusers because they are financially dependent on them.⁸

- ▶ **Paid safe days help survivors get the care they need while staying productive at work.**
 - ▶ In one survey of domestic violence survivors, nearly all the survivors surveyed – 96 percent – reported that domestic abuse affected their ability to perform their job duties.⁹ Fifty-six percent reported being late to work because of interference from their batterers.¹⁰ Ending the abuse and getting help improves a survivor’s life both personally and professionally.

Paid Safe Days Support Survivors and Prevent Job Loss

A paid sick and safe days standard would help survivors of violence access critical services without risking their financial security. Nationwide, several states,¹¹ cities and counties have passed laws that provide domestic violence survivors with paid or unpaid leave specifically to address legal, medical and psychological issues that result from abuse, but access to this important protection shouldn’t depend on geography.

A national paid sick and safe days law – such as the Healthy Families Act (H.R. 932/S. 497) – would provide much-needed workplace protections. This bill would set an important national standard that would allow workers to earn up to seven paid sick days a year to care for their own health and that of their family members. It includes a domestic violence provision that would allow workers to use those days to recover from or seek assistance related to domestic violence, stalking or sexual assault.

1 Breiding, M.J., Smith, S.G., Basile, K.C., Walters, M.L., Chen, J., & Merrick, M.T. (2014, September). Prevalence and characteristics of sexual violence, stalking, and intimate partner violence victimization in the United States—National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, United States, 2011. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly*, 63(SS08), 1-18 (Table 6). Retrieved 1 October 2015, from <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/ss6308a1.htm#Table6> (Unpublished calculation based on total 12-month prevalence of “contact sexual violence,” physical violence and stalking estimated number of victims for both men and women.)

2 U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2003, March). *Costs of Intimate Partner Violence Against Women in the United States* (pp. 27-32). Retrieved 1 October 2015, from <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/ipvbook-a.pdf>

3 U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2013, December 24). *Intimate Partner Violence: Consequences*. Retrieved 1 October 2015, from <http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/intimatepartnerviolence/consequences.html>

4 Adams, A. E., Bybee, D., Tolman, R. M., Sullivan, C. M., & Kennedy, A. C. (2013). Does Job Stability Mediate the Relationship Between Intimate Partner Violence and Mental Health Among Low-Income Women?. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 83(4), 600.

5 Lyon, E. (2000, October). *Welfare, Poverty and Abused Women: New Research and Its Implications*. National Resource Center on Domestic Violence, Building Comprehensive Solutions to Domestic Violence Publication. Retrieved 1 October 2015, from http://www.vawnet.org/Assoc_Files_VAWnet/BCS10_POV.pdf

6 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2015, September). *National Compensation Survey: Employee Benefits in the United States, March 2015* (Table 32). Retrieved 1 October 2015, from <http://www.bls.gov/ncs/eps/benefits/2015/ebbl0057.pdf>

7 Thomas, K. A., Goodman, L., & Putnins, S. (2015). “I have lost everything”: Trade-offs of seeking safety from intimate partner violence. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 85(2), 170.

8 Matjasko, J. L., Niolon, P. H., & Valle, L. A. (2013). The Role of Economic Factors and Economic Support in Preventing and Escaping from Intimate Partner Violence. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 32(1), 122-128.

9 Ridley, E., Rioux, J., Lim, K.C., Mason, D., Houghton, K.F., Luppi, F., & Melody, T. (2005, October). *Domestic violence victims at work: How perpetrators impact employment*. Maine Department of Labor & Family Crisis Services Publication. Retrieved 1 October 2015, from http://www.maine.gov/labor/labor_stats/publications/dvreports/survivorstudy.pdf

10 Swanberg, J., & Logan, T. (2005). Domestic violence and employment: A qualitative study. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 10(1), 3-17.

11 National Partnership for Women & Families. (2014). *Work and Family Policy Database* (Issue: Domestic Violence and the Workplace; Status: Statute). Retrieved 1 October 2015, from http://www.nationalpartnership.org/issues/work-family/work-family-policy-database/search-results.html?state=&subject=domestic-violence-and-the-workplace&active_year=&leg_type=statute

The National Partnership for Women & Families is a nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy group dedicated to promoting fairness in the workplace, access to quality health care and policies that help women and men meet the dual demands of work and family. More information is available at NationalPartnership.org.

© 2015 National Partnership for Women & Families. All rights reserved.