

Building Better Workplaces for Family Caregivers

Millions of Americans who are elderly, disabled, or chronically ill rely on family caregivers, as do our nation's children. Many of these family caregivers are struggling to manage both their caregiving responsibilities and the jobs they need to support their families. It's time—past time—for us to adopt policies that will help caregivers hold jobs and care for their loved ones.



**Nearly thirty percent of
American adults are unpaid
caregivers for family
members or friends.**

Source: National Alliance for Caregiving/AARP



The majority of family caregivers work outside the home. In 2009, 66 million Americans were unpaid caregivers for family members or friends. Roughly 44 million of them were caring for someone age 50 or older.¹ But in most cases, family caregivers also have to earn an income. Nearly six in ten caregivers are employed and more than seven in ten have been employed at some point while providing care.²

Caregivers often have to scale back their careers and compromise their economic security to meet family caregiving responsibilities.³ Our workplaces simply have not adapted to meet caregivers' needs. When work and caregiving clash, caregivers and their loved ones both suffer.

Americans agree: it's time for our workplaces to catch up to the reality of caregivers' lives. Nearly 90 percent of Americans say that we need more flexible workplace policies to help us meet our obligations to care for family members.⁴ The vast majority support policies that ensure

that workers don't have to risk their jobs or lose pay because they're caring for family members.⁵

Workers should be able to earn job-protected paid sick days so they can meet short-term family health needs. Crucial to caregiving is the ability to meet immediate, short-term health care needs and access preventive care. But tens of millions of workers don't have access to job-protected paid sick days—time that they need in order to fulfill family caregiving responsibilities like taking a child to a medical appointment or coordinating a parent's care.⁶ For these workers, taking time off to care for a sick family member means risking discipline, loss of pay, or even loss of a job.



CARETAKERS OF CHILDREN NEED PAID LEAVE

Children get well faster when a parent cares for them. But most parents work—and most working parents don't have paid leave to use when a child is ill.

A national paid sick days standard would allow workers to earn a minimum number of days per year to take care of their own health or fulfill their caregiving responsibilities. Caregivers would no longer have to choose between caring for family members and their jobs or economic security.

Caregivers need paid family and medical leave to manage family members' serious illnesses—as well as their own. Some of the most common reasons for needing care include cancer, stroke, Alzheimer's disease, and mental or emotional illness.⁷ These serious conditions frequently require sustained periods of care which may cause a caregiver to need time off from work. In such cases, paid leave is vital.

Unfortunately, only ten percent of workers can take paid leave for a family member's long-term care.⁸ And while the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) provides for unpaid leave, the law covers only about half the nation's workers.⁹ Millions cannot afford to take the unpaid leave the law provides. Paid family and medical leave would allow workers to take time off from work with pay in order to care for family members without risking financial ruin.

Workers and caregivers in San Francisco and Washington, D.C. can already take advantage of paid sick days and those in California and New Jersey get paid leave for caregiving. We're working to make sure the rest of the country catches up...



"If I were to ever need to take my sick dad to the hospital, I would risk losing my job. My company has no such thing as 'paid sick days.'"

— DENISE, CAREGIVER FROM ILLINOIS

Join Us in Supporting Our Nation's Family Caregivers

Americans need paid sick days and strong paid family and medical leave policies. The momentum is building. Right now, campaigns for paid sick days or paid leave are underway at the federal level and in more than half the states. Join us in fighting for workplaces that value our nation's caregivers by allowing them to provide care and provide for their families!

To join the fight, sign up for updates at

<http://www.nationalpartnership.org> or visit us on Facebook at

<http://www.facebook.com/nationalpartnership>.

The National Partnership for Women & Families is a non-profit, non-partisan 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 www.nationalpartnership.org.



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¹ National Alliance for Caregiving and AARP. (2009). *Caregiving in the U.S. 2009*, 12.

² See note 1, 52-53; 13.

³ See note 1, 14; 59.

⁴ Lake Research Partners for Wider Opportunities for Women. (2010). *Cross-generational Perspectives on Economic Security*, 21-22.

⁵ Lake Research Partners for CCMC. (2007). *Banners from a Nationwide Survey of 1,200 likely voters*; National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago for the Public Welfare Foundation. (2010). *Paid Sick Days: Attitudes and Experiences*.

⁶ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2010). Current Population Survey, *Employee Benefits in the United States*, Table 6: Selected Paid Leave Benefits: Access.

⁷ See note 1, 4.

⁸ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2010). National Compensation Survey, *Employee Benefits in the United States*, Table 32: Leave benefits: Access, private industry workers.

⁹ Waldfogel, Jane. (2001). Monthly Labor Review, *Family and Medical Leave: Evidence from the 2000 Surveys*, 18