

All Families Deserve Paid Sick Days

From immigration to family visitation to paid sick days, there are definitions of family embedded in a diverse array of policies, programs, and administrative rules at all levels of government and in the private sector. More than 30 paid sick days laws have been enacted in the United States that are making a real difference in the lives of families every day; however, to have the greatest impact, we need a national standard to ensure ALL families can access paid sick days.

The way we define family in workplace and economic policy doesn't recognize nearly 80 percent of American families.

The 2010 U.S. Census revealed that 79.8% of our country's households do not fit the nuclear family model of a married mother and father and their biologically related children. Our families take many forms includ-

ing blended families, single-parent families, LGBTQ families, chosen families, multi-generational families, and multi-national families; however, many policies continue to define "family" by the nuclear model.



Yee Won's Story: I was born and raised in Malaysia, but came to the U.S. so that I could safely express my sexual orientation, gender identity, and political beliefs. Separated from my "blood family" by 8,000 miles, I have created a

strong chosen family in Portland, OR. My chosen family celebrated with me when I became a U.S. citizen three years ago, took care of me when I was recovering from my gender transition surgery, and are named in my living will and my health care directives. In creating my home in the U.S., I left behind Malaysia's guaranteed paid sick days for all wage earners. Now when I am sick, I do not have that guarantee. My family will benefit directly from this legislation, and as a result our family will be strengthened.

Family bonds are our most personal and intimate, and we should be able to define our families however the reality of our lives dictate.

Far too many workers in the United States don't have access to paid leave, and when they do, it often excludes their loved ones. In addition to nearly 80% of families being excluded, we're now seeing more legislation that would let businesses actively deny services and benefits to families based on their beliefs about what families should look like.



Terrie's Story: My family is a safety net that protects an entire community. When my brother is ill, my other brother cares for him. My sisters and I share caregiving for our mother. I am there for my partner's two children with whom I have no legal relationship.

When finances are tight, the extended family ensures that, collectively, we are not spiraling out of control. A broad definition of family in paid sick days policy will ensure that my family can do its job—caring for each other.

We need a national standard for paid sick days that will allow ALL families the time they need to care for their loved ones. That standard for defining family must be “Blood or Affinity.”

A gold standard for defining family already exists at both the federal and municipal levels: “Blood or affinity” is a way of defining family in policy that allows people to include close family relations, regardless of biological or marital ties.

A strong collective community effort led to Los Angeles being the first city in the country to adopt the standard of “blood or affinity.” This is also the definition of family that the federal government uses in its own regulation of federal workers' right to work leave.

It's time to take a stand and fight for ALL families. How we define family in policy must match with lives of real Americans.

Questions about how family is defined in workplace and economic policy? Contact:

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THE FACTS ON FAMILY

- 57 million Americans live in multi-generational family households. Of the 30 paid sick days laws in the U.S., 26 cover adult children, 25 cover grandparents, and 24 cover parents-in-law.¹
- About 25% of Latinos and African Americans live in a multi-generational household, and 27% of Asian Americans do.²
- 1 in 4 unmarried American adults between the ages of 25 and 34 are living with a significant other.³ Of 30 paid sick days laws in the United States, 25 cover domestic partners.⁴
- More than 3.6 million children live in a household that is not headed by a mother or father.⁵
- 78% of children in the country—nearly 60 million children—live with at least one sibling.⁶ In many of these families, children grow up receiving critical care and support from their siblings. As these siblings get older and become adults, they often care for each other when ill.

1. Richard Fry and Jeffrey S. Passel, In Post-Recession Era, Young Adults Drive Continuing Rise in Multi-Generational Living, Pew Research Center (July 17, 2014), <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2014/07/17/in-post-recession-era-young-adults-drive-continuing-rise-in-multi-generational-living>.

2. Ibid.

3. Wendy Wang and Kim Parker, Record Share of Americans Have Never Married, Pew Research Center (September 24, 2014), <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2014/09/24/record-share-of-americans-have-never-married/>.

4. See A Better Balance's comparison chart of paid sick days laws at <http://www.abetterbalance.org/web/images/stories/Documents/sickdays/factsheet/PSDchart.pdf>

5. Children Living with Neither Parent, National KIDS COUNT (2015) (data source: Population Reference Bureau, analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Supplementary Survey, 2001 Supplementary Survey, 2002 through 2013 American Community Survey), last accessed March 2016, available at: <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/111-children-living-with-neither-parent?loc=4&loct=2#detailed/2/2-52/true/36,868,867,133,38/any/439,440>.

6. Rose M. Kreider and Renee Ellis, Living Arrangements of Children: 2009, U.S. Census Bureau (June 2011), pp. 13-14, <http://www.census.gov/prod/2011pubs/p70-126.pdf>.