

Paid Sick Days: A Strategy To Reduce Emergency Room Visits in New Hampshire

Fact Sheet - August 28, 2009

New Hampshire is considering legislation, HB 662, to ensure that all workers in the state can earn paid sick days. Guaranteed paid sick days would help reduce medical costs by reducing emergency room and hospital use.



Many hospitalizations in New Hampshire are avoidable and the state has a high rate of emergency room use.

- In 2007, 471 out of every 1,000 people in the state visited an ER, while 401 out of every 1,000 in the United States did so.
- Between 2001 and 2005, there were 431,227 ER visits and 85,906 hospitalizations in New Hampshire for 7 chronic conditions - asthma, angina, congestive heart failure, hypertension, epilepsy, diabetes, and pneumonia - that could have prevented with appropriate care in a doctor's office.

Paid sick days will reduce costly and avoidable hospital use and emergency room use, thereby reducing health care expenditures.

- Nationally, among workers with health insurance, those without paid sick days were about 20% more likely to use the emergency room each year.
- Paid sick days could allow workers and their dependents easier access to preventive and early care and help avoid unnecessary hospitalizations.
- Paid sick days may be associated with less severe illness and a reduced duration of disability due to sickness. Workers with paid sick days are 14% more likely to visit a medical practitioner each year, which could translate into fewer severe illnesses and hospitalizations.

Many New Hampshire workers lack paid sick days.

- According to a 2008 poll, 65% of part-time workers and 16% of full-time workers lacked paid sick days in the state. Overall, one-quarter of workers did not have paid sick days.
- 38% of the NH workforce earning less than \$30,000 annually lack paid sick days, compared with 15 percent of the workforce earning more than \$100,000 annually.
- 44% of NH workers with high school or less education lack paid sick days, compared with 21% of college graduates.

The health of all workers, children, and seniors in New Hampshire would significantly benefit if workers earned paid sick days and used them when ill or when a family member needs care.