

NM has highest rate of workers lacking paid sick leave

Written by By Sharon Kayne Communications Director, NM Voices for Children
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Paid sick leave: an important piece of family well-being puzzle

Half of all workers in New Mexico cannot earn paid sick leave and have to either go to work when they or a family member is sick, or stay home and lose pay. This is the highest rate in the nation, according to a report released August 19, entitled “Valuing Families at Work: The Case for Paid Sick Leave in New Mexico.” The report was released by the child advocacy organization, New Mexico Voices for Children.

A big part of the problem is that the federal government has no paid sick leave policy - unlike most wealthy nations. Several states and municipalities have enacted paid sick leave policies - most recently, Oregon - but paid sick leave legislation for New Mexico stalled during the most recent legislative session.

“Everyone gets sick and everyone who works should have the basic right to take care of themselves when they get sick,” said James Jimenez, executive director of NM Voices. “This isn’t just an employment issue - it’s a public health issue.”

The report looks at which sectors (among other employer demographics) are most and least likely to offer paid sick leave. Across the nation, jobs in goods-producing sectors are least likely to include paid sick leave, with the services sector running a close second, while jobs with state and local governments are most likely to include paid sick leave.

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“This is another piece of the child well-being puzzle where New Mexico does poorly,” said Jacob Vigil, a research and policy analyst with NM Voices and the report author. “If parents can’t take time off of work to take care of a sick child or take them to the doctor for well-child checkups and preventive health care, it’s the children who suffer the most. And when parents forgo pay in order to care for themselves or a sick child, they may come up short when paying the bills, which can lead to skipped meals and other stressors that negatively impact children,” he added.

The report concludes that statewide paid sick leave and paid family leave laws would go far toward ensuring all New Mexico workers and their families have opportunities to lead healthier lives and are crucial to building the strong workforce our state needs to support a thriving economy.

To see the full report, “Valuing Families at Work: The Case for Paid Sick Leave in New Mexico,” go to <https://www.nmvoices.org/archives/13241>.

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