

Earned Sick Days and the Spread of Flu Epidemics

Playing off the popularity of the new movie "Contagion," a new [video](#) released by the organization Family Values at Work discusses how inability to use earned sick leave accelerates the spread of flu epidemics. The video features five American workers in different sectors of the economy, highlighting how millions of Americans often face the choice between going to work sick and losing a day's pay (or possibly being fired). Working when ill can [expose](#) dozens of colleagues and/or customers to illness, which can greatly accelerate the spread of epidemics.

Speaking of which: On Monday, September 12, Seattle became the third U.S. city to [pass](#) legislation requiring employers to provide earned sick leave to workers.

Millions of Americans still do not have the option of taking a sick day to care for family members or themselves without putting their jobs, their healthcare benefits, or their family stability at risk. Two-thirds (64 percent) of women with children under six are in the labor force. Nationwide, 22.9 million families provide care for an adult family member or friend, and nearly 80 percent of those care recipients are over the age of 50.

[AAUW](#) works to advance policies that will improve workplaces for employees with family responsibilities of all kinds. Such protections and improvements are critical to breaking through educational and economic barriers for women.