



# Paid Sick Days

September 2009

## Reaching Out to Businesses to Say YES to a Level Playing Field

This primer is intended to help advocates at the national, state, and local levels to identify, contact, and engage businesses to gain support for paid sick day's legislation. Several state and local campaigns have been conducting business outreach and this primer intends to build on their involvement and successes.

There is already widespread public support for paid sick days as a basic labor standard. More than three-quarters of workers polled view paid sick days as a basic right of employment that should be guaranteed by the government. (*Paid Sick Days: A Basic Labor Standard for the 21st Century*, National Opinion Research Center, August 2008).

As businesses that support paid sick days become more vocal, policymakers are better able to refute opponents' positions, such as the argument that the implementation of paid sick days is "unworkable" or a new labor standard is inappropriate. In addition, involving receptive businesses in the policy process can help ensure that if problems with specific aspects of the legislation are identified; those can be successfully addressed so as to minimize opposition.

**There are a variety of reasons it makes business sense to support paid sick days.** The costs of replacing workers, including advertising positions and interviewing and training replacements, are often greater than the costs of paid sick time to retain existing workers. There is a tremendous public health benefit for providing paid sick days to employees; this helps employers too who suffer the consequences when their employees or customers fail to show up due to contagious illness. Finally, a minimum standard of paid sick days levels the playing field for employers; that helps make paid sick days a 'given' for all businesses and no one loses out by providing paid sick days since all competitors are on the same field.

Gaining business support for public policy change is never easy. That's because many businesses are wary of public policy; still others are wary of any change. Even supportive business may be reluctant to 'go public'. While these businesses support paid sick days they may not believe that they have the time or expertise to engage. The challenge is to both find those businesses that support paid sick days and to help them to become public about their support.

Paid sick days allow a worker to earn paid time off to address his own ordinary health needs such as when the flu hits or to care for an ailing family member. The U.S. is one of the few nations in the world without a national law that provides paid sick time.

Listed below are a number of tips for reaching out to businesses, ideas for how to discuss paid sick days, and different "asks" of businesses. Reaching out includes local family businesses that may be in your own backyard and larger business that have received accolades for their family-friendly policies. As you know, the best business contacts are often the ones nearest at hand. Businesses are more likely to get on board if their allies or even their competitors are on board as well, so it is critical to engage those already on board to help get their peers involved.

CLASP has collaborated with MomsRising and partner organizations in a few states and cities to identify and reach out to businesses that support paid sick days. As CLASP continues to reach out to businesses it continues to adapt its own techniques. Thus, this primer is intended to be a piece that develops over time. CLASP welcomes your suggestions and edits to this document. CLASP also acknowledges and thanks the Public Welfare Foundation for its grant to enable it to conduct business outreach.

For additional information on how paid sick days makes good business sense, please visit [www.paidicksdays.org](http://www.paidicksdays.org), or contact CLASP for local and state materials on businesses and paid sick days.

### Business contacts may be closer than you think.

- **Friends** - Contact close friends, colleagues, neighbors, and relatives that are business owners. Your own team or coalition may have a business owner member or know of friendly business owners through family or neighborhood connections.
  - Put business outreach on your coalition's agenda. Ask coalition members if they have a family member, close friend, or contact with a business owner. Assign outreach and report back.
  - Ask the business owners to join the initiative.
  - Ask the businesses to reach out to their colleagues in the business community or allow you to reach out to their colleagues and to reference them.
  - Seek out neighborhood businesses that coalition members patronize that are willing to consider the legislation.
- **Board Members** - Approach your own board as well as board members of organizations with which you partner. Non-profit boards often include prominent and potentially empathetic business leaders.
  - Start with your own board and move to the boards of organizations with which you partner.
  - Assess the business affiliations of board members as well as business owners or operators that your board members may know.
  - Consider asking a member of your own board to take on the task of mobilizing board member business owners.
  - Consider asking a member of your board who is a business person to be the point person for identifying other supportive businesses in the community.
- **Listservs** - Identify listservs of state progressive groups that may have business owners among them. For example, if there is a listserv for parents, school nurses, or elders in your area, members of these listservs may either own a business, have a relative who does, or just know someone to enroll in the

Recently, a small-business owner joined the steering committee of the New Hampshire Women's Lobby. The small-business owner agreed to share her close business contacts so the coalition can reach out to her network of New Hampshire business contacts.

effort. Do not overlook listservs within your coalition and with other groups with which you already partner. They may already have business relationships that you may cultivate.

- **Progressive Organizations** - Consider partnering with associations of progressive businesses, minority-owned businesses, or women-owned businesses. For example, in Massachusetts, the Sustainable Business Network of Greater Boston's public online directory of businesses lists potential supportive businesses owners.

Many groups may appear to be progressive and potential allies on certain issues, but because they may be unfamiliar with your organization or even the paid sick day issue, it may be challenging at first to approach them.

## Businesses that may have been recognized by award givers.

- **Award-winning businesses** - National and local award-winning businesses in your city or state may prove to be friendly to the issue of paid sick days. Those businesses that have already been recognized for good work-life business practices ought to be prioritized for joining in your paid-sick days initiative. Many work-life awards, however, do not ask about paid sick days policies. Examples of national award providers who provide workplace awards are:

- American Rights at Work Labor Day List: Partnerships that Work
- Companies that Care Honor Roll
- Fortune Magazine's Top Employers to Work For
- Psychologically Healthy Workplace Awards
- Sloan Awards for Business Excellence in Workplace Flexibility
- Social Venture Network Innovation Awards
- Winning Workplaces Awards for Top Small Businesses
- Working Mother Media: 100 Best Companies



Please call CLASP so that it may provide you with a list of the national awards given to employers in your state.

You may also identify state/local award programs and obtain the list of recent awardees. A local magazine or newspaper may publish a "Best Places to Work" once a year and highlight some of the best practices of your home-grown businesses. For example, in Philadelphia, the *Philadelphia Magazine* annually ranks the best places to work among Philadelphia-region businesses. In New Hampshire, *Business NH Magazine* sponsors the annual best companies to work for survey. Local publications may be a great source of businesses with family-friendly policies.

"We really have not heard much about [the San Francisco ordinance] being a major issue for a lot of businesses."  
- Carol Piasente, San Francisco Chamber of Commerce

### Be Prepared to Talk to Potential Business Supporters.

- Once you have identified potential business supporters, you should be ready to contact and engage them about the paid sick days legislation.
- For national retail businesses, check in with CLASP. We are in the process of reaching out to companies such as TJ Maxx, Costco, and Green Mountain Coffee. We can help you by confirming whether we have already contacted the large business and whether the company has confirmed their position.

Nearly half of all private-sector U.S. workers do not receive any sick time and 70 percent do not have sick days to care for sick children. For low-wage workers, fully 77 percent of workers in the bottom wage quartile—nearly 24 million—do not have any paid sick days.

For larger companies, you may be referred to someone who works in Human Resources or Government Relations.

- Provide background information for the business:
  - the name of your organization and where it is located geographically.
  - explain how you identified them. E.g., “Your business was named one of Working Mother Media 2009’s Best Places to Work.”
  - explain the purpose of your call. E.g., “You are a “high-road” employer and we would like to follow up with you about your possible support for paid sick days legislation. Would you be interested?”
- **Words matter.** Remember to clarify how you are defining paid sick days and paid time off and not to confuse the terms with paid family leave. Be clear about what reasons would count for paid time off.
- Ask whether the employer would be willing to support the bill or ordinance. E.g., Are you aware of a bill pending in your state legislature called “The Healthy Families and Workplaces Act” that would entitle all workers to earn up to 7 paid sick days per year? We would really like to enlist your support for the legislation
- Be clear on how you would like the employer to support the cause. This may take one of several forms. For example, you might:
  - request it participates in a business sign-on letter
  - offer to draft a quote for the business for inclusion in advocacy materials

Take advantage of other opportunities to meet with business owners:

- present at a local conference attended by human resource professionals or business executives.
- go door-to-door in a particularly progressive district or neighborhood.
- present at a local business association meeting.

- ghost write an op-ed piece, or
- draft a press release for an employer
- Or, you might request the business:
  - appear at a press conference
  - testify at a hearing
  - identify other businesses that might want to get engaged.
- The business owner may immediately push back. He or she may be familiar with the legislation or have strong feelings about a legal provision to regulate employees' days off or regulating businesses at all.
- Be prepared to respond to some of the myths or frequently asked questions regarding paid sick days, with facts such as: employees with paid sick days are less likely to leave their jobs; paid sick days do not negatively affect job growth; paid sick days are good for public health.
- As you can imagine, business owners of both large and small businesses have a lot on their plates and are not necessarily looking for a social cause, so be prepared for their push back and **be persistent**. Employers receive several solicitations, requests to take part in surveys, and other calls that may make them wary of a call from an advocate.
- Employers are likely to be skeptical if your inquiry is the first time they have heard of the legislation or if they are busy, they may not respond right away or may not respond at all, so **be creative**.
- You should immediately follow up with brief articles, legislative bulletins on the legislation, a written summary of the bill's provisions, a sign-on letter, or frequently asked questions.

### Some Resources you may find helpful:

#### CLASP PUBLICATIONS:

Paid Sick Days Legislation: A Legislator's Guide - [www.clasp.org/admin/site/publications/files/0326.pdf](http://www.clasp.org/admin/site/publications/files/0326.pdf)

Presenteeism and Paid Sick Days - [www.clasp.org/admin/site/publications/files/0212.pdf](http://www.clasp.org/admin/site/publications/files/0212.pdf)

Get the Prescription: Child Care Workers Need Paid Sick Days -  
[www.clasp.org/admin/site/publications\\_archive/files/0204.pdf](http://www.clasp.org/admin/site/publications_archive/files/0204.pdf)

#### INSTITUTE FOR WOMEN'S POLICY RESEARCH

No Time to be Sick: Why Everyone Suffers When Workers Don't Have Paid Sick Leave –  
[www.iwpr.org/pdf/B242.pdf](http://www.iwpr.org/pdf/B242.pdf)

Paid Sick Days Improve Public Health by Reducing the Spread of Disease - [www.iwpr.org/pdf/B250.pdf](http://www.iwpr.org/pdf/B250.pdf)

Valuing Good Health in Massachusetts: An Estimate of Costs and Savings for the Paid Sick Days Act - <http://www.iwpr.org/pdf/B249.pdf>

Valuing Good Health: An Estimate of Costs and Savings for the Healthy Families Act -  
[www.iwpr.org/pdf/B248.pdf](http://www.iwpr.org/pdf/B248.pdf)

#### CENTER FOR ECONOMIC AND POLICY RESEARCH

A Review of Sickness-related Leave in 22 High Human Development Index Countries -  
[www.cepr.net/documents/publications/paid-sick-days-companion-2009-05.pdf](http://www.cepr.net/documents/publications/paid-sick-days-companion-2009-05.pdf)

**HUMAN IMPACT PARTNERS HEALTH IMPACT ASSESSMENT** - <http://www.humanimpact.org/PSD>

**MOMS RISING** - [www.momsrising.org](http://www.momsrising.org)

**NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP FOR WOMEN AND FAMILIES** - [www.paid sickdays.org](http://www.paid sickdays.org)

#### URBAN INSTITUTE

Employers' Perspectives on San Francisco's Paid Sick Leave Policy -  
[www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/411868\\_sanfrancisco\\_sick\\_leave.pdf](http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/411868_sanfrancisco_sick_leave.pdf)

**SLOAN WORK AND FAMILY RESEARCH NETWORK** - <http://wfnetwork.bc.edu/pdfs/PaidSick.pdf>

#### **For local resources on paid sick days, please check out:**

California - [www.paid sickdaysca.org](http://www.paid sickdaysca.org)

Colorado - [www.9to5.org](http://www.9to5.org)

Connecticut - [www.everybodybenefits.org](http://www.everybodybenefits.org)

Illinois - [www.womenemployed.org](http://www.womenemployed.org)

Maine - [www.mainewomen.org/paid sickdays.html](http://www.mainewomen.org/paid sickdays.html)

Milwaukee - [www.9to5.org/local/mwk](http://www.9to5.org/local/mwk)

New Hampshire - [www.nhwomen.org/resources.php](http://www.nhwomen.org/resources.php)

NYC - [www.abetterbalance.org](http://www.abetterbalance.org) or [www.timetocareny.org](http://www.timetocareny.org)

North Carolina - [www.ncsickdays.org](http://www.ncsickdays.org)

Philadelphia - [www.pathwaystopa.org](http://www.pathwaystopa.org)

San Francisco - [www.sfgov.org/site/olse\\_index.asp?id=49389](http://www.sfgov.org/site/olse_index.asp?id=49389)

Vermont - [www.voicesforvtkids.org](http://www.voicesforvtkids.org) or [www.vtlivablewage.org/sickdays.html](http://www.vtlivablewage.org/sickdays.html)