

WHAT'S NEW WITH KIDS?

April 2008

Site of the Month

Family Values at Work

Knock on wood, I rarely miss work due to personal sickness or a family emergency. Last month, however, was an exception. I flew to Minnesota to be with my father, who underwent quadruple bypass surgery at the Mayo, and my mother, who is ill. While there, I caught the flu. All in all, I missed a couple of weeks of work.

I was fortunate because I did not have to choose between losing my job and my family responsibility or my health. My employer, UNLV, provides two sick days a month with pay. Not all workers are as fortunate as I am. The report titled *Family Values at Work: It's about Time* published startling statistics on working conditions. For example, 48 percent of private-sector workers in the U.S. are not entitled to paid sick days and 70 percent are not entitled to paid sick days to care for a sick child or family member. This represents 55 million and 86 million workers, respectively.

The table below, developed by the Dr. Jody Heymann of McGill Institute for Health and Social Policy, which is included in the report, shows that of the world's 10 most competitive economies, the U.S. is the only one that does not guarantee employers to offer sick days to all employees. Overall, however, the most economically competitive counties guarantee sick leave days to their employees.

Sick Days Laws in the World's Ten Most Competitive Economies

Rank of Most Competitive Economies	Country/Economy	Sick Days Required	More than 10 Days/Year
1.	Switzerland	Yes	Yes
2.	Finland	Yes	Yes
3.	Sweden	Yes	Yes
4.	Denmark	Yes	Yes
5.	Singapore	Yes	Yes
6.	United States	No	No
7.	Japan	Yes	Yes
8.	Germany	Yes	Yes
9.	Netherlands	Yes	Yes
10.	United Kingdom	Yes	Yes

Recommendations for changes to workplace rules are offered in the report. These include:

1. Ensuring paid sick days
2. Broadening the Family and Medical Leave Act
3. Implementing family and medical leave insurance
4. Providing support for school success

It seems obvious that children would benefit from more family-friendly sick days laws. Research, as the report indicates, shows that when parents help care for a sick child the child's recovery is shorter than without parental assistance. Stories of parents who lost their jobs or were threatened with job loss to care for their sick children are delicately presented in the report.

The 2007 report, written by Richard A. Mendel and published by the MultiState Working Families Consortium, is available at: <http://www.9to5.org/familyvaluesatwork/>. For more of Dr. Heymann's work go to: http://help.senate.gov/Hearings/2007_02_13/Heymann.pdf.

Rennae Daneshvary, PhD
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