

Lack of paid sick leave linked to poverty

June 14 2018



(HealthDay)—Workers without paid sick leave are three times more likely to have incomes below the poverty line, two new studies find.

Compared to adults who have the employee benefit, those without paid sick leave are also more likely to have difficulty affording food. They're also more likely to use [welfare](#) assistance, the researchers said.

"Paid sick leave benefits serve as a structural mechanism for preventing working families from becoming the working poor," said study co-author LeaAnne DeRigne, an associate professor at Florida Atlantic University.

"Given the public investments made in welfare, food stamps and other [social services](#), mandating paid sick leave is a clear policy lever for reducing the need for these services among millions of individuals nationally," DeRigne said in a university news release.

Nearly one-third of all workers in the United States don't get paid sick leave. Only seven [states](#) mandate it, the researchers said.

They used data from the 2015 National Health Interview Survey to see how lack of paid sick leave affects income and the need for welfare services.

Not only were these workers more likely to live in poverty, they also were nearly 1.5 times more likely to get income support from state and county welfare services. In addition, they were almost 1.4 times more likely to receive [food stamps](#) (now called the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.)

Greater medical expenses, lack of preventive care and missed wages likely explain the need for these social services, the researchers said.

"Numerous studies have shown the negative effects lack of paid sick leave has on society, but this is the first time a direct correlation has been observed between the absence of these benefits and the incidence

of poverty," said Patricia Stoddard Dare, co-author of the studies.

"This adds to the growing body of evidence that paid [sick leave](#) is a key factor in health care affordability and economic security," said Dare, an associate professor of social work at Cleveland State University.

The studies were published recently in the journal *Social Work in Health Care* and in the *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* .

More information: For more on paid sick leave, visit the [U.S. Department of Labor](#).

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Citation: Lack of paid sick leave linked to poverty (2018, June 14) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2018-06-lack-paid-sick-linked-poverty.html>

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