

Labor *Family* NEWS

PARTNERING WITH UNIONS TO PUT FAMILIES *first*

FALL 2009

GET SICK, STAY HOME:

Workers Struggle Without Paid Sick Days

BY BRANDY DAVIS

Thanks to the resurgence of the swine flu, or H1N1 virus, this year's flu season is making headlines. Every year 5-20% of the population gets the seasonal flu – causing illness, requiring hospital stays, and even resulting in deaths. But public officials across the country are bracing for the possibility that this flu season could be much worse. In August, a presidential panel projected that the swine flu could infect half the U.S. population this fall and winter. Fortunately, labor unions and community allies are pushing for workplace policies that protect public health and help working families cope with the spread of communicable disease.

More than 1/3 of all flu cases are transmitted in schools and workplaces – a fact so crucial that the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) directs sick workers and children to stay home when sick and remain home until 24 hours after their fever subsides. But this CDC recommendation fails to address an important fact: half of all workers are not able to take a paid sick day when ill. And only 1/3 of workers can take paid sick days to care for their sick child. The last wave of swine flu cases and school closures highlighted the untenable situation working families find themselves in every flu season: they will lose pay and risk job loss if they take time off to care for themselves or a sick loved one.

In his May 2nd weekly address, President Obama stated, “We urge employers to allow infected employees to take as many paid sick days as necessary.” But with the lack of state and federal standards mandating paid sick days, this statement does not go far enough. At the bargaining table and in political action agendas, unions are stepping up to the plate.

Recently, regulatory changes were proposed to protect federal workers from the spread of communicable disease by expanding sick leave. Under the proposed changes, federal workers could use sick time to care for themselves or a family member due to exposure to a communicable disease,

workers paid sick days have been made even more urgent by the swine flu threat. Since San Francisco first won paid sick days for all its workers, similar measures have been proposed across the country. And unions are joining forces with advocacy and community groups to enact mandates that require paid sick days for all workers. At a rally supporting a paid sick days measure in New York City, Mike Fishman, president of 32BJ Service Employees International Union (SEIU) said, “When (union) doormen get sick, they can take off, because they have sick days ... But if you are a security officer in the city, you are going to be at work if you are sick, because you cannot afford to take the day off without pay.”

Contact the Labor Project for Working Families for information on how to get your union involved in a local campaign for paid sick days: info@working-families.org

whether or not they display symptoms. Federal employees would also be able to advance 30 days of sick time due to their own exposure, or 13 days for a family member's exposure. These are the types of policies that unions can and have bargained for. Cincinnati Federation of Teachers Local 1520 won a contract that allows members to take sick time for exposure to contagious disease and advance 5 days of sick time in a pay period.

Policy efforts to guarantee all

In this issue:



- **Supporting Members with Special Needs Children**
- **Women to Overtake Men as Majority of Workers**

UNIONS WIN IT!

WHAT: Vacation Sell Back

WHERE: Delaware

WHO: International Union of Electrical Workers-Communications Workers of America (IUE-CWA) Local 88315/ Dover Organization of Employees & City of Dover

Permanent full-time and part-time employees of the City of Dover who are members of IUE-CWA Local 88315 have the option to sell back any unused vacation leave earned prior to the month of December each year. Permanent full-time employees can sell back between 5-10 vacation days while part-time employees can sell back 2.5-5 vacation days. That payment is based on a worker's base salary, plus cost of living and longevity increases, at the date of the issuance of the back pay check.

MORE ON 2



9to5 leads the fight to win paid sick days for all workers in Milwaukee, WI.

Photo by 9to5

UNIONS WIN IT!

FROM PAGE 1

WHAT: Benefits Coverage for Survivors

WHERE: Pennsylvania

WHO: United Food and Commercial Workers International Union (UFCW) Local 1776 & Berks County Home and Hospital

Following the death of a retired Berks County Home and Hospital employee, the surviving spouse can get 100 percent of the deceased employee's pension benefit. The collective bargaining agreement between the employer and UFCW Local 1776 also provides continued health coverage for the spouse of the deceased retiree until remarriage or death. The contract language also provides for continued coverage for dependent children or dependents who require continual special care, become incapacitated or are full-time college students.

Looking for good contract language? Have some of your own to share? Get ideas, find resources and share your successes at www.learnworkfamily.org



PUBLISHED QUARTERLY BY THE

Labor Project for Working Families

Jenya Cassidy, Editor

Netsy Firestein, Executive Director

Jenya Cassidy, Education and Training Coordinator

Jeffrey Dam, Administrative Assistant

Brandy Davis, Policy Coordinator

Vibhuti Mehra, Communications & Development Director

Nhi Tran, Administrative Assistant

Printed by Lithograph Reproductions, Inc
Designed by Mikko Design

Reprint freely, with acknowledgment.

MAKING NEWS?

Send ideas, news, and comments to
info@working-families.org

INSIDE STORY

SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN:

Working Parents Face Greatest Challenges

BY JENYA CASSIDY

Balancing work and family is hard enough. Add to that being the parent of a child with special needs. The list of things you might be responsible for in a given day includes: coordinating therapy for your toddler or school age child, meeting with the school district around your child's IEP (Individualized Education Plan), commuting to another city because it offers the best program for your child, shopping for specialized equipment and worrying about saving for the future because caring for your child 24/7 may extend beyond traditional childhood years.

MORE FAMILIES HAVE SPECIAL NEEDS

The population of children with special needs is growing – an estimated 22% of households with children report at least one child with a disability. Despite the prevalence of families with special needs, there exist few workplace supports and employees often choose not to disclose their child's condition on the job. But balancing the demands of a full time job and full time caregiving can prove an isolating, impossible task and many parents of special needs children end up working less and even losing their jobs.

"Little attention has been paid to the needs of working parents with children who have physical, emotional and learning disabilities," says Judi Casey, the Director of Sloan, Work and Family Research Network (Sloan) "But the number of families affected, the stress on family relationships, and the impediments to workforce participation are considerable." (PR Leap.com July 2008).

WORKING PARENTS FACE CHALLENGES

According to the US Department of Health and Human Services, families with special needs children spend an extra 10 hours a week coordinating their children's care. And almost 24% of these families cope by drastically reducing work hours or having one parent stop working altogether. Parents of special needs children have a higher than average divorce rate and experience increased physical and financial stress. Sloan reports that many parents face disciplinary measures when their work suffers and about 25% have been fired at least once from a job due to difficulty balancing caregiving and work.

Heather Sedlock, now a columnist, speaks and writes about losing her job when she took time off after her son's near fatal seizure.

FOR UNIONS: FIVE WAYS TO SUPPORT PARENTS OF SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN

- **Survey** members to find out about work family challenges (for survey examples, go to learnworkfamily.org)
- **Educate** the rest of the bargaining unit about the workplace needs of parents of disabled children
- **Identify** benefits and workplace supports that would help parents balance work and family
- **Bargain** for flexible schedules, leave, increased benefits and other needs identified in the survey
- **Build** an on-going campaign around these issues and keep the pressure up



There are few workplace supports for families with disabled children

She points out that a parent of a child with special needs has double the work family stress of a parent with a typically developing child. "And if the working parent is the only parent? Multiply these issues times two because there is no one else to pitch in," she says.

On May 6, 2008 Sloan hosted a one-day think tank of union, business and work family leaders to discuss the challenges faced by parents of special needs children. In the executive summary, participants concluded, among other things, that "having a child with a disability is not recognized by employers or the general public as common, and as such, remains a "hidden" problem." The panel recommended that advocates work to raise the profile of parent caregivers in the workplace and work towards flexibility, access to resources and a more supportive atmosphere to boost retention on the job.



An estimated 22% of households with children report at least one child with a disability.

UNIONS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

The Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) initiated a program for working parents with special needs children who are members of the union. The Special Needs Program, funded by the employer and coordinated by the union, provides on-going support from special needs advisors, financial support, opportunities to connect with other parents who are members and information and access to community resources. The union recommended setting up the program after surveying members about child care needs and finding that parents of special needs children had the biggest challenges. "I think the first thing we did right was to really listen to our members," says Jamie Kass, Child Care Coordinator of CUPW.

A member of CUPW and a participant in the special needs program, Jeanette, says the program helped answer a lot of her questions and provided much-needed financial support at a difficult time, "Our son Dawson was born with a chromosome abnormality. In my quest for information and help I came across the Special Needs Project at one of our union meetings. I made a call and found that there was help for our family".

In 2005, CUPW negotiated the addition of adult sons or daughters with disabilities into the Child Care Fund and created what is now called the Moving On project. "Having adult children with special needs can present an even greater challenge for parents in finding appropriate services and living arrangements. The first step is getting it out there so parents can talk to each other and get support," says Jamie Kass. Moving On

addresses the on-going needs of adult dependents who have transitioned out of children's services. Jamie Kass said, "Negotiating these services has been a boon for the union too. Members know they have a place to go for support and it makes us stronger."

UNIONS NEED TO EDUCATE EMPLOYERS

Michelle Stegner, a shop steward for Teamsters, Local 728 in Savannah, Georgia believes that unions play a vital role in standing up for parents with special needs children. Stegner helped a fellow union member take a leave of absence to care for her autistic son who started acting out in preschool at the same time that her husband went overseas to serve in Iraq. The employer agreed that she would maintain her seniority when she returned to work but later denied a raise that would have been due to her. Stegner says, "These employers don't know our rights – we have to educate them and keep fighting. I know I won't give up fighting for members like this and the union is behind me 100%."

Experts say that lack of communication around special needs can cause the biggest problems in the workplace. Jamie Kass agrees: "It can be hard for even union members to support each other when they don't know what's going on. You see that person who is always on the phone coordinating doctor's appointments for their child or the one who leaves work early to attend a school meeting or comes in from lunch late due to an emergency. We need to put the information out there in order to start supporting each other."

NEWSWORTHY

■ **WORKING MORE FOR LESS?** You don't have to get laid off to feel the pain of this recession. Many workers lucky enough to have survived recent layoffs are still feeling unhappy and unmotivated at work. The majority of those still employed now put in longer hours for less pay. Raises, bonuses and other incentive programs have been slashed since the downturn began. Employees saddled with additional workloads for less pay are becoming increasingly dissatisfied. Roxanne Emmerich, Author and Workplace Productivity expert, predicts that at some point, employers will have to do more to incentivize employees. She recommends rewards that are not necessarily monetary. "People just want to be recognized for the most part," she said.

Jessica Dickler, CNNMoney.com, September 17, 2009

POLICY BRIEF

■ **PAID LEAVE IMPACTS HEALTH OF WHOLE FAMILY** In a recent study in American Journal of Public Health (AJPH), researchers interviewed parents of chronically ill children about use of paid family leave. The study demonstrates the positive impact of receiving full pay during leave on the whole family. The study emphasized the importance of education to increase awareness and use of paid family leave programs. *AJPH 4-09, WFC Resources Newsbrief 8-09*

DID YOU KNOW?

■ **US EMPLOYEES EARN THE LEAST SEVERANCE** "Involuntarily separated" employees in the US earn the least amount of severance pay worldwide, no matter what their level or tenure, says a global study by Right Management. *WFC Resources News Brief, February 2009*

GREAT RESOURCES

■ **WORKING AMERICA, AFL-CIO** presents a one-stop guide, Unemployment Lifeline, that links unemployed workers to the resources in their area. <http://www.unemploymentlifeline.com/>



VITAL STATISTIC

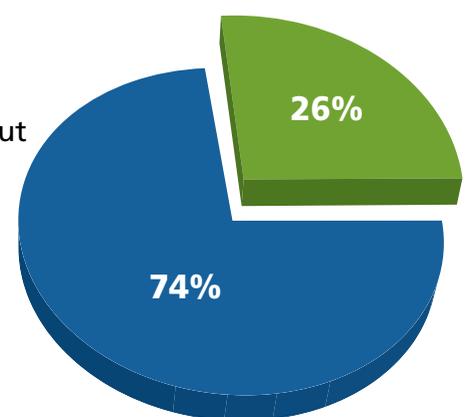
Women Gain Jobs as Men Lose Them

Women are on the verge of outnumbering men in the workplace for the first time, a historic reversal caused by long-term changes in women's roles and massive job losses for men during this recession'

Economic Crisis

■ Women have lost about 1.66 M jobs overall

■ Men have lost about 4.75 M jobs overall



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics - USA Today, September 3, 2009

Labor Project for Working Families

2521 CHANNING WAY NO. 5555 | BERKELEY CA 94720

PARTNERING WITH UNIONS TO PUT FAMILIES *first*

Find the Inside Story on:



- Supporting Members with Special Needs Children



Visit our newly designed website www.working-families.org to download resources on organizing, bargaining and advocating for work family issues.

STAY CONNECTED!

If you are not on our mailing list and would like to receive Labor Family News, send an email to info@working-families.org or call us at (510) 643-7088.

Include your name, organization and full address including zip code, phone number and email.

SUPPORT US!

Donate online at www.working-families.org or mail a check to the Labor Project for Working Families 2521 Channing Way, #5555, Berkeley, CA 94720

OUR FUNDERS

A.L. Mailman Family Foundation
 Alfred P. Sloan Foundation
 Annie E. Casey Foundation
 Berger Marks Foundation
 Ford Foundation
 Ms. Foundation for Women
 Public Welfare Foundation
 The California Wellness Foundation
 Unitarian Universalist Veatch Program

In Kind Support is Provided by:
 Institute for Research on Labor and Employment, UC Berkeley

OUR SPONSORS INCLUDE...

Champion (\$7500-\$9999)
 American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees

Leaders (\$5,000-\$7,499)

American Federation of Teachers
 California Teachers Association
 International Brotherhood of Teamsters
 Laborers International Union of North America
 Service Employees International Union
 United Automobile, Aerospace & Agricultural Implement Workers of America

Partners (\$2000-\$4999)

AFL-CIO
 AFL-CIO
 Association of Flight Attendants - CWA
 California Nurses Association/National Nurses Organizing Committee
 SEIU Local 1000, CSEA
 Office & Professional Employees International Union
 SEIU Local 1021
 United Food and Commercial Workers
 UNITE HERE
 United Steelworkers of America

Organizers (\$1000-\$1999)

AFT Guild Local 1931
 California Faculty Association
 California Federation of Teachers
 CA Laborers – Strategic Committee on Public Employees
 California Labor Federation
 Communications Workers of America

CWA District 9
 International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers
 Plumbers and Steamfitters Local 159
 UAW Local 2865
 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers – East
 United Steelworkers of America

Advocates (\$500-\$999)

Alameda County Central Labor Council
 ATU Local 192
 California School Employees Association
 Coalition of Labor Union Women – East Bay Chapter
 CWA Local 1034
 CWA - Southern California Council
 Florida Professional Firefighters
 International Association of Machinists
 IFPTE Local 21
 SEIU Local 721
 UFCW Local 5
 United Teachers Los Angeles

Supporters (\$250-\$499)

*ABC Federation of Teachers, AFT Local 2317
 AFGE Local 1122
 AFSCME DC 47
 AFSCME Local 2187
 AFT Local 2121
 ATU Local 265
 Berkeley Federation of Teachers
 California Media Workers Guild, Local 39521
 CA Teamsters Public Affairs Council
 Carpenters Local 22

Carpenters, Northern California Counties
 Coalition of Labor Union Women
 Contra Costa County Central Labor Council
 CWA Local 9000
 CWA Local 9410
 Engineers & Scientists of California Local 20, IFPTE
 Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers
 IBEW Local 6
 IBEW Local 1245
 IFPTE Local 17
 ILWU Northern California District Council
 North Bay Labor Council
 OPEIU Local 3
 OPEIU Local 29
 Sacramento Central Labor Council
 San Bernardino-Riverside Counties CLC
 San Francisco Labor Council
 San Mateo County Central Labor Council
 Sign Display & Allied Crafts, Local 510
 Teamsters Joint Council 7
 Teamsters Local 287
 Teamsters Local 315
 Teamsters Local 350
 Teamsters Local 952
 UFCW Local 101
 UFCW Local 1428
 United Educators of San Francisco
 UNITE HERE Local 2
 UNITE HERE Local 49
 Weinberg, Roger & Rosenfeld
 * New Sponsors!

NON PROFIT ORG

US Postage

PAID

Adept Ent

94608

SEE OUR WEBSITE

www.working-families.org

NETSYNOTE

A few years ago I led a workshop for the women's committee of a large union. Many of the women in the room were middle aged leaders who had been



involved in the labor movement for a long time. As we went around the room each woman spoke about their own work and family situations: one had an adult son with mental health problems; one had a daughter with down syndrome and another had a daughter with asthma. Out of a room of about 20 women, a surprisingly large number were caring for a disabled child. These women had done union work together for years, but had no idea about each other's struggles.

It often happens that parents of children with special needs are hesitant to tell co-workers and associates. It is a hidden problem but one that greatly impacts the lives of many of our union brothers and sisters. Whether autism or depression, drug problems, asthma or developmental disabilities, parents who have children with special needs worry about work family balance. Can they take time off to go to a doctor? Are they going to run out of paid time off because of doctors' appointments or emergencies? Do they have flexibility in their schedule when they need to be with their child?

And unlike an illness, most disabilities do not go away. In our inside story, we highlight the groundbreaking work of the Canadian Postal Workers Union in this area – providing resources and bargaining on behalf of their members with special needs children.

A union member called us recently. His teenage son has severe depression and was even hospitalized. While his wife has job flexibility, his workplace has grown weary of his need to leave early or take days off to coordinate his son's on-going care. But depression doesn't go away after a few days and some antibiotics and the majority of parents of children with chronic conditions or special needs require more workplace flexibility than usual in order to care for their children. These are issues that parents deal with everyday and our workplaces need to respond in a way that works for the worker and the job.

Netty Frester

Executive Director