

NNEDV Celebrates 20th Anniversary of FMLA

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Job-Protected Leave is Critical for Victims of Domestic Violence

Today, NNEDV celebrates the 20th anniversary of the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA). Supporting both women and men to meet the dual needs of work and family, the FMLA has been used by U.S. workers more than 100 million times to take temporary leave from work at critical times, without the added worry of losing their jobs or their health insurance.

Many survivors of domestic violence suffer emotional and physical abuse that forces them to take time off of work. "Recovering from domestic violence often requires precious time, energy, resources and health care in order to restore the victim's ability to contribute meaningfully at work," said Kim Gandy, President and CEO of NNEDV. "Domestic violence victims have already suffered a loss to their health and safety – they cannot afford to also lose their jobs."

This landmark law entitles eligible employees of covered employers to take unpaid, job-protected leave for specified family and medical reasons, including health-related issues resulting from domestic violence. Those who take FMLA leave are assured that they can return to work after their leave, and will continue to have group health insurance coverage under the same terms and conditions. Unfortunately, fewer than half of all employees are covered by the FMLA, because they work for small businesses.

NNEDV applauds the impact of FMLA in honoring victims' physical and mental health needs in the aftermath of domestic violence, and for recognizing the importance of job-protected leave in ensuring the long term financial stability and economic empowerment of domestic violence survivors. However, many women recovering from illness or injury cannot afford to take the unpaid leave available under FMLA, and as a result they do not receive the care they need. For this reason, paid sick days for every employee are necessary, as well as paid FMLA leave.

NNEDV urges all states and territories to adopt laws ensuring that victims of violence, regardless of the size of their employer's workforce, can take leave for the following reasons:

- Medical care and psychological treatment
- Relocation or other safety planning
- Seeking a restraining order or participating in legal proceedings relating to domestic violence
- Obtaining services from a victim's services organization

"We celebrate the FMLA's 20 years of enhancing the balance between family and professional life," said Gandy. It is time to take the next steps toward safeguarding domestic violence survivors' much needed employment and adopting the necessary additional safeguards, including provisions for paid sick days and paid FMLA leave."

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