

A Proactive Policy Prescription to Improve the Health and Wellbeing of Women and Girls in Wisconsin

ISSUE BRIEF COMPENDIUM

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Eliminate the Gender Wage Gap

The Issue:

As long as women have been established members of the workforce, there has been a gap in earnings between the genders. There are many causal factors that contribute to the “gender wage gap,” most of which have to do with longstanding, [system-wide biases](#) against women. These biases often stem from assumptions about women that are outdated and detrimental, such as the assumption that the man in a heterosexual marriage is the primary breadwinner. [These biases](#) mean that women and men don’t get the same type of jobs, jobs for which women are usually hired pay less than jobs that men typically get, and men and women get paid different amounts for the same work.

For example, these discriminatory assumptions are reflected in the pay rates of married men and women. On average, married men make more than their unmarried counterparts while married [women](#) make far less than their unmarried counterparts. This disparity could in part be due to the societal assumptions that [men should be the primary breadwinner](#) in a marriage, single women must provide for themselves, and married women should be provided for.

Our society has partially addressed some of the issues that contribute to the gender wage gap, which helped reduce the wage gap from the 1970s to the 1990s. However, the wage gap has remained [fairly constant since 2001](#), with women in the United States earning about [80%](#) of what their male counterparts earn. Despite this improvement, we must continue to address the wage gap that remains more than 50 years after Congress’s formal ban on sex discrimination in the [Equal Pay Act of 1963](#).

Women in Wisconsin are no exception to the wage gap reality, earning approximately [78.9%](#) of what their male counterparts earn, often for doing the same type of work-- jobs that involve the same effort, education, experience, and other qualifications. This is true of jobs requiring any level of education or experience, as [the gap increases](#) as education level increases. Highly educated women make about 26% less than their equally educated male counterparts.

The gender wage gap is not just a statistical phenomenon; it is also a social reality about which many women are painfully aware in their own lives. In focus groups conducted by the Wisconsin Alliance for Women’s Health in conjunction with 9to5 Wisconsin, a panel of fourteen low- to moderate-income women from the greater Milwaukee area gave high priority to the issue of equal pay during their discussion of challenges they face in daily life. When asked what could be done to make life easier, the women cited that equal and fair pay for women and people of color would greatly improve their lives. A study conducted in 2015 affirms this priority, with [58 percent](#) of women polled ranking equal pay to be the most important challenge for women in the workplace.

Why is Eliminating the Gender Wage Gap Important to Women

- Eliminating the wage gap will incentivize women to work towards career advancement. A 2013 [study](#) of workers in Australia’s healthcare sector found that the gender pay gap actually deterred women from working more hours, which made these women less likely to receive promotions or pay raises. The ripple effect of unequal pay is especially important for African American and Latina women, where the gender wage gap is even more [pronounced](#) than for white or Asian women.
- As mentioned above, the gender wage gap is closely intertwined with racial discrimination. Compared to white men, women of any race make significantly less, with Latina and African American women respectively making [52% and 63%](#) of what white men make. Combatting this issue is a step toward improving overall equity in the workforce, especially for women of color. Decreasing the gender wage gap is extremely important for families where women are the sole breadwinner, which also [disproportionately](#) affects women of color.
- More than ever, women are responsible for the financial wellbeing of their families. Whether they are the main breadwinner of their house, co-breadwinner, or financially supporting relatives such as parents or grandparents, working women play a vital role in the financial stability of their families. As many as [63%](#) of women with children are either the sole provider (41%) or co-provider (22%) in their house, shattering the

norm that most families rely solely on men to make money. Neglecting to pay women what they deserve harms not only women but the family members who depend on them.

What Wisconsin Can Do

Addressing this systemically ingrained wage bias against women requires a multifaceted policy approach. Luckily enough for policy makers, it is also a problem that can be improved by addressing many of the other issues brought forward in this policy prescription manual, such as by increasing the state's Earned Income Tax Credit and raising Wisconsin's minimum wage. Other policy solutions to reduce the wage gap include:

- **Reinstate Wisconsin's Equal Pay Law** that was repealed during the 2011-2013 legislative session. Equal pay protections will give women and other groups the legal right to pursue justice in the state court system if they have been victims of employment-based discrimination. The repealed law provided victims of employment discrimination with compensation for lost wages, reinstatement of the employee, and punitive damages against an employer that willfully engages in discriminatory employment practices. [Equal pay legislation](#) was proposed in 2015 that unfortunately did not pass into law.
- **Restore Collective Bargaining Rights and Strengthen Unions.** The [gender wage gap](#) for union workers is 56 percent lower than for non-union workers. Union representation also helps reduce the even larger wage gap experienced by [women of color](#).
- **Open the pathways for free and fearless discussion of wages.** In many employment situations, there are [rules](#) laid out to deter workers from discussing their earnings, which can leave employees in the dark on the fairness of their salary. It is estimated that as many as [60%](#) of private sector employees were discouraged or prohibited by their employer from discussing wages. In the event that a woman does discover wage inequity in her workplace, there is often little that she can do as an individual to fix the problem. As suggested by the Department of Labor, [systemic change](#) that makes discussion of wages easier could lead to better outcomes for employees that experience discrimination.
- **Require companies to self-analyze or [audit their wages with a discrimination lens](#).** Many companies, and importantly those receiving government funding or contracts, are not being held accountable to the standards laid out in the Equal Pay Act. With weak state laws and enforcement mechanisms, some of these companies might not even be aware that they are participating in practices that lead to wage discrimination. Bringing discrimination to light is the first step in improving wage discrepancies within a company and throughout Wisconsin.

How Can I Help Eliminate the Wage Gap in Wisconsin?

- Contact your [state legislators](#) to encourage them to support reinstating Wisconsin's equal pay protections or support any of the other public policies listed above that would help reduce the wage gap in Wisconsin.
- If you are a woman facing discriminatory behavior in your workplace, learn how to confront the issue and speak with your employer. [Arm yourself with the facts](#) about what you're making, what you should be making, and your rights as an employee. If you would like further education on discussing equal pay with your employer, [attend a seminar](#) or workshop in your area on wage discrimination discussions.

Resources:

- [National Women's Law Center: Moving Women & Families Forward, See Page 28](#)
- [Economic Policy Institute: Closing the Pay Gap and Beyond](#)
- [American Association of University Women: The Simple Truth about the Gender Pay Gap](#)
- [Council of Economic Advisors Issue Brief, Gender Pay Gap: Recent Trends and Explanations](#)

Increase the State Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)

The Issue

The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) is designed to help move low-income families out of poverty by providing an incentive to work. The EITC is a "refundable" tax credit, which means that it is available to workers even if they did not earn enough wages to pay federal or state income taxes. In order to claim the EITC, a tax filer must have some earnings from work.

There is both a federal EITC and a Wisconsin EITC, and many workers are eligible for both. The federal EITC is determined by a worker's income, number of children, and marital status. [The Wisconsin EITC](#) is based on a percentage of the federal EITC (0%, 4%, 11%, or 34% depending on the number of qualifying children). Nationally, 1 in 5 people eligible for the EITC fail to claim the credit.

One weakness of both the federal and state EITC's is that [neither provides much benefit](#) to low-income workers who do not have dependent children. The [federal](#) EITC is only available to workers without dependent children age 25 or older and is only a small fraction of the tax credit provided to workers with dependent children. Workers without dependent children are completely ineligible for the Wisconsin EITC.

Unfortunately, Wisconsin recently [cut the state EITC](#) as part of the 2011-2013 state budget, which increased the amount of taxes that lower-income families paid to the state between 2011-2015 by approximately [\\$114 million](#).

Why is Increasing the State EITC Important to Women

- The federal EITC has been an incredibly successful tool for lifting women, and especially women of color, out of poverty. In 2014, the federal EITC lifted the incomes of more than [5.6 million people above the poverty line](#), including almost 1.6 million adult women, nearly 3.1 million children, nearly 1.2 million African Americans, and more than 2.3 million Latinos. [Recent expansions](#) of the federal EITC benefited about 19 percent of Black women, 27 percent of Hispanic women, and 12 percent of Asian American and Pacific Islander women, compared with about 11 percent of all workers. Increasing the state EITC would provide a similar benefit to women from traditionally marginalized communities in Wisconsin.
- Increasing the state EITC would also help offset the [regressive nature of state and local taxes](#), which [disproportionately burden lower-income individuals](#) because of their reliance on sales and property taxes that take a larger share of lower- and middle-income earners' income than would a progressive income tax.
- Increasing the state EITC also provides a strong incentive to work. Many lower-income working moms cannot afford basic costs like child care and reliable transportation that are necessary in order to obtain and maintain stable employment. Increasing the state EITC will [help make the costs of these necessities within the reach](#) of more lower-income working moms.
- [Simultaneously increasing the state EITC and state minimum wage](#) would be particularly helpful to low-wage working women and their families, as combining these policies would provide a [higher income boost to lower-wage workers and would cover a larger number of workers and families](#) as compared to either policy in isolation. For more information about boosting Wisconsin's state minimum wage, see our section on that topic.

What Wisconsin Can Do

Increasing the federal EITC has been one of the few areas of bipartisan agreement reached by Congress during recent years. Congress has both [extended the eligibility for the federal EITC and increased the amount of the EITC](#) for families with three or more children. These changes were recently made permanent.

Wisconsin should follow Congress' lead. During the 2015-2016 legislative session, two pieces of legislation were introduced that would improve the state EITC for lower-wage workers and their families:

- The [first bill](#) would have restored the cuts that were made to the state EITC as part of the 2011-2013 state budget and created a refundable state EITC for lower-wage workers who do not have children.
- The [second bill](#) would have allowed an individual to claim the state EITC for a child who does not have the same principal place of residence as the tax claimant and even if another person claims the federal and state EITC for the child, so long as the claimant is legally the parent of the child and in compliance with a child support order for the child.

The Wisconsin Department of Revenue [estimated](#) that, if enacted, the restoration of the previous cuts to the state EITC would increase the EITC for lower-wage working families by approximately \$25 million per year.

Unfortunately, neither piece of legislation was passed into law.

How Can I Help Make Expanding the State EITC a Reality in Wisconsin?

There are lots of ways you can help make expanding the state EITC a reality in Wisconsin.

- ✓ Call or email your [state legislators](#) to urge them to support legislation that would expand the state EITC
- ✓ Connect with organizations in Wisconsin already working on expanding the state EITC:
 - [Wisconsin Council on Children and Families](#)
 - [The Public Policy Institute](#)
- ✓ Learn more about why expanding the state EITC is important for women's economic security with these resources:
 - [Center on Budget and Policy Priorities: *State Earned Income Tax Credits and Minimum Wages Work Best Together*](#)
 - [Wisconsin Budget Project: *Increasing Both the Earned Income Tax Credit and the Minimum Wage Would Strengthen Wisconsin's Families*](#)
 - [National Women's Law Center, *Moving Women and Families Forward: A Roadmap to Economic Justice*](#)

Help Make Child Care Affordable for Working Families

The Issue

Balancing work and family responsibilities has become increasingly difficult for many working families. The cost of child care is a tremendous strain on many household budgets, especially in an economy where the majority of workers' wages have been [stagnant](#) for the past generation. To put the cost of quality child care for working families in perspective, the average cost of infant care at a child care center in Wisconsin is [higher](#) than the average cost of tuition at a public university. Child care costs are even more pronounced in more expensive urban areas, such as [Milwaukee County](#), where the annual cost for center-based infant care is over 18 percent greater than the statewide average, even though the median household income for a married couple family in Milwaukee County is actually lower than the statewide average by about 6.5 percent. In real terms, this means that a median-income family in Milwaukee County would pay 17.3 percent of their annual income towards child care for one infant.

Recent state child care policy changes in Wisconsin have had mixed results for working families. On the one hand, Wisconsin's implementation of the [Youngstar](#) quality rating and improvement system has [dramatically increased](#) the overall quality of child care centers in the state. Unfortunately, Wisconsin's child care subsidy program for low-income families ([Wisconsin Shares](#)) has consistently been [underfunded](#) for the past seven years. As a result, fewer lower-income families can afford to send their children to high quality child care centers and many of the centers that have implemented quality improvements may not be able to sustain these improvements without higher reimbursement rates from the state.

In addition to underfunding Wisconsin Shares, Wisconsin also [does not](#) have a state Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit (CDCTC). The federal government provides very modest assistance to low-income families through the non-refundable federal CDCTC. 26 states, including the District of Columbia, have [state CDCTC's](#), 12 of which are refundable.

Why is Making Child Care More Affordable Important to Women?

- High child care costs represent a [barrier](#) to women's participation in the labor force because working mothers also tend to have lower salaries than their male counterparts. For instance, the average working mother who earns at or below the poverty level would pay 43 percent of her income for full-time child care for a child under the age of 5.
- Women continue to bear the [majority](#) of child care responsibilities, even in relationships where both partners work. Public policies that make child care services more affordable and relieve some of the burden of unpaid child care responsibilities on women help remove some of the barriers to employment faced by many women.
- The lack of affordable child care disproportionately affects women of color and single mothers, who are [significantly overrepresented in low-wage occupations](#). According to the National Women's Law Center, among mothers working in low-wage jobs, over half (57 percent) are women of color and nearly half (47 percent) are single parents.
- The many women providing child care are themselves among the working poor.

What Wisconsin Can Do

- The [Wisconsin Council on Children and Families](#) has created a thorough report of Wisconsin's YoungStar and Wisconsin Shares programs that provides significant insights about how our state's child care subsidy

and child care quality programs interrelate and can be improved to better serve working families and child care service providers. The report recommends that Wisconsin adopt the following three policies to ensure that the YoungStar and Wisconsin Shares programs better complement one another:

- Create a new state funding stream separate from Wisconsin Shares of \$10 million to existing child care programs that are either trying to achieve or sustain the two highest YoungStar quality ratings.
 - Increase Wisconsin Shares provider reimbursement rates to a level that would allow lower-income families to afford to send their children to high quality child care centers.
 - Increase incentives for child care teachers and caregivers to enter and remain in the field of child care. Child care is a low-paying profession with an average salary in Wisconsin of approximately \$10 per hour, which leads to a high turnover rate. Half of child care teachers have an associate degree or more.
- According to [4-C](#), another current shortfall of Wisconsin Shares is that the program only has one eligibility scale for subsidies. This fails to account for regional cost of living disparities, which penalizes families in the higher cost counties that often have higher job growth. As a result, families lose child care subsidies before they can afford to pay for unsubsidized care. This affects their job stability and their children's access to quality early childhood programs. Having several different eligibility scales based on a county's cost of living would lead to more families transitioning out of poverty and a more stable workforce in many business sectors.
 - Wisconsin could create a nonrefundable state CDCTC which mirrors the federal CDCTC. Legislation to this effect was [introduced](#), but not passed, during the 2015-2016 legislative session. Because the current federal CDCTC is nonrefundable, it [has limited value](#) to low-income families that already have no or minimal federal tax liability.
 - Even better, Wisconsin could follow the lead of other 12 other states and adopt a **refundable** state CDCTC. A [refundable](#) state CDCTC would allow many more low-income working families to take advantage of the tax credit. Analysis of a proposal to make the federal CDCTC refundable indicated that doing so would [reduce child poverty and allow more parents to work](#).

How Can I Help Make Affordable Child Care a Reality in Wisconsin?

- ✓ Call or email your [state legislators](#) to urge them to support legislation that would increase state child care subsidies, create a refundable state CDCTC, provide more support to existing programs that are striving to meet higher quality standards, and increase career support and compensation for child care providers.
- ✓ Connect with organizations in Wisconsin already working on increasing access to affordable, quality child care:
 - [Wisconsin Early Childhood Association](#)
 - [Community Coordinated Childcare Care, Inc. \(4-C\)](#)
 - [Wisconsin Council on Children and Families](#)
- ✓ Learn more about why making childcare affordable is important for women's economic security with these resources:
 - [The Wisconsin Council on Children and Families: Are We at the Crossroads for Wisconsin Child Care?](#)
 - [National Women's Law Center: Improving the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit Would Help Working Families and Promote Tax Fairness for Women](#)
 - [National Women's Law Center: Moving Women and Families Forward: A state roadmap to economic justice](#)

Paid Family and Medical Leave

The Issue

Nearly everyone who works will eventually need to take time off of work in order to care for themselves if they become seriously ill, care for a seriously ill family member, or care for a new baby. While many workers have access to unpaid leave either through the federal [Family Medical Leave Act \(FMLA\)](#) or [Wisconsin's state FMLA](#), only 12% of workers nationally have paid family leave through their employers and fewer than 40% have personal medical leave through an employer-provided, short-term disability program. As a result, many Wisconsin workers who take time off to take care for themselves or their families often face a significant loss of income. To put the status of the United States' paid leave policies in context, the U.S. is the only industrialized nation in the world that does not provide workers with any form of guaranteed paid leave from work.

Why is Paid Family and Medical Leave Important to Women?

- Women currently make up approximately half of the U.S. workforce, but are [still far more likely than men to be the primary caregivers for children](#), even in relationships where both partners work.
- Women are highly overrepresented in low-wage occupations—approximately two-thirds of low-wage jobs in Wisconsin are held by women. Low-wage workers [are far less likely to have access to paid family or medical leave](#) and are much less likely to be able to afford to take any unpaid leave for which they might be eligible.
- Working women without access to paid leave are often forced to make incredibly difficult decisions about whether to take time off of work in order to care for themselves or their family members. Sadly, [nearly 1 in 5](#) low-wage working moms have lost a job due to their own illness or to care for a sick child.
- Our communities and families are relying on working women more than ever. 63 percent of families rely on women as either a [primary or significant breadwinner](#). Many of these families cannot afford to lose income when working women have to take time off to care for themselves or their families.

What Wisconsin Can Do

Despite the ongoing inaction from Congress regarding paid family and medical leave, [several states have enacted](#) or are considering whether to enact state insurance programs that provide workers with access to paid family and medical leave. California, New Jersey, and Rhode Island all have state family paid leave insurance laws in effect. In 2016, [New York](#) and [Washington, D.C.](#) passed generous paid family and medical leave laws. New York's law, which will go into effect in 2018, will be the most generous in the nation.

Similar legislation was introduced in Wisconsin during the 2015-2016 legislative session. If enacted, the [Wisconsin Family and Medical Leave Insurance Act \(Wifi\)](#) would do the following:

- Make all Wisconsin workers eligible for up to 12 weeks of paid leave for personal or family illness, or to care for a new child
- Provide income replacement between 66% of wages for most workers and up to 95% of wages for those with lower incomes
- Provide 2.6 million workers with paid leave insurance coverage through an employee contribution of between \$2 - \$3.50/week
- Expand the definition of eligible family members for whom an employee could take paid leave to include siblings, grandchildren, and grandparents

While the legislation did not pass before the end of the legislative session, paid family and medical leave advocates will continue building support for this legislation from the public and elected officials between now and the 2017-2018 legislative session.

How Does Paid Family and Medical Leave Insurance Work?

One cost-effective way to ensure that more workers have access to paid family and medical leave is to create state-operated paid leave insurance funds that are funded by payroll contributions from employees, employers, or joint employee-employer contributions. Paid leave insurance funds are accessed by eligible employees as a form of wage replacement if they have a new baby, become seriously ill, or have to care for a seriously ill family member. The benefit amount is usually a percentage of the employee's wage and is capped at a maximum weekly amount. Under these systems, eligible employees are guaranteed a maximum amount of paid time off, which varies between 4 to 12 weeks in the states that have passed paid leave laws.

How Does Paid Family and Medical Leave Insurance Affect Businesses?

[Surveys](#) of employers in states that have enacted paid family and medical leave insurance programs have indicated that for the vast majority of businesses, paid leave insurance programs have either a positive or neutral effect on their business operations. State family leave insurance programs can also lead to cost savings for businesses that coordinate their own benefits with the state paid family leave program, which allows employees to use paid family leave insurance instead of, or in combination with, employer-provided paid sick leave, vacation, or disability benefits. In addition, paid family leave insurance programs can also help businesses better [retain workers and save money on turnover costs](#).

How Can I Help Make Paid Family and Medical Leave Insurance a Reality in Wisconsin?

There are lots of ways you can help make paid family and medical leave a reality in Wisconsin.

- ✓ Call or email your [state legislators](#) to urge them to support the Wisconsin Paid Family and Medical Leave Act
- ✓ Connect with organizations in Wisconsin already working on paid family and medical leave
 - [9T05 Wisconsin](#)
 - [Family Values @ Work](#)
- ✓ Learn more about paid family and medical leave with these resources:
 - [U.S. Department of Labor Paid Family and Medical Leave Fact Sheet](#)
 - [National Partnership for Women and Family Paid Family and Medical Leave Fact Sheet](#)
 - [National Women's Law Center, *Moving Women and Families Forward: A State Roadmap to Economic Justice*](#)

Ensure Employees Have Paid Sick Days

The Issue:

For many workers in Wisconsin, choosing to take a day off of work if they are sick or to care for a sick family member means forfeiting a day's pay and sometimes even their job, as Wisconsin law does not guarantee employees any "paid sick days." As many as [36%](#) of American workers don't have access to a single paid sick day. An even higher percentage ([45.5%](#)) of Wisconsin workers are without paid sick days. This is especially problematic for the individuals least likely to receive paid sick days, such as those who work in [small businesses](#) (with fewer than 100 employees) or in low paying jobs (the lowest 25% of salary ranges). Other groups that are disproportionately lacking paid sick days include [part-time employees](#) and limited-term employees.

Per an estimate by the Economic Policy Institute, missing just three days of work without pay can eliminate a family of four's budget for [healthcare](#) that month. Sick days are important for much more than just recovering from illness-- they also cover days needed for wellness checkups for parents and children, as well as other routine health appointments. Access to these routine medical services is an important facet of maintaining [long-term health](#). Sick days don't just benefit employees; they also benefit those who could be exposed to illness (both fellow employees and the general public) if a sick person came to work. Paid sick days also make business sense for employers, as paid sick days are linked to [higher productivity and lower turnover rates](#) as well as lower [overall](#) costs of providing health insurance for employees.

What's the Difference between Paid Sick Leave and Paid Sick Days?

Paid sick days are intended to be used for limited-term absences, like minor illnesses or attending a checkup, where paid sick leave is used for extended absences, such as in cases of serious illness or maternity leave. Both address the reality that everyone will eventually need to take some time off work to care for themselves or their family, but in different ways to address short- and long-term situations.

In focus groups conducted by the Wisconsin Alliance for Women's Health in cooperation with 9to5 Wisconsin, women from multiple age groups indicated that paid sick days would significantly improve their quality of life and their families' wellbeing. The participants expressed a strong need for some workplace flexibility in order to respond to life's many unexpected caregiving challenges, for which most of these women were solely responsible within their families. The group reported that providing women with the safeguard of flexible, paid sick days would improve their lives and reduce some of the tension between their breadwinning and caregiving responsibilities.

Wisconsin has already attempted to address the lack of paid sick days, but with little success. Voters in Milwaukee passed a paid sick leave ordinance that would mandate local employers provide workers with paid sick days, but the ordinance was voided by a bill that preempted local ordinances that provide private-sector employees with paid time off.

Why are Paid Sick Days Important to Women?

- Although women and men are more likely today to [share responsibilities](#) for caring for relatives, women are still disproportionately more likely to be the [primary caregiver](#) to their children and their aging family members. This means that women are more likely to miss work for scenarios like a child's sickness or a parent's checkup appointment. Paid sick days, which can be used flexibly for a person's own health needs or to take care of others, will help women (and men) attend to familial or personal needs without loss of income or fear of losing their jobs.
- Women disproportionately hold [lower income jobs and/or work part time](#) as compared to men, which means that one or more unpaid days off work can cause them significant financial distress. Not only do women in lower paying or part-time careers need their expected salary in order to meet basic needs, these women are also some of the least likely to have access to paid sick days.
- Women need time off to access preventive care and regular wellness checks. Typical office hours for a gynecologist or primary care physician run between 8:00 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. on weekdays, with offices rarely open on the weekends or in the evenings. This means that a woman working a typical 40-hour work

week must interrupt her work schedule in order to attend preventive care appointments and regular checkups. Access to these appointments is [vital](#) to maintaining general health and preventing long-term illness.

- The flexibility afforded by paid sick days will allow victims of crimes like domestic violence, rape, and stalking to recover from the trauma related to their victimization. These crimes disproportionately affect women, as women constitute [90%](#) of adult rape victims and [85%](#) of domestic abuse victims. Allowing victims to seek the care they need will improve their mental and physical health in the time following a traumatic experience.

What Wisconsin Can Do

Most states, including Wisconsin, do not have regulations in place to mandate paid sick days. The federal government made important progress recently when the President signed an [Executive Order](#) that will be effective in early 2017 that will require any business contracting with the Federal Government to provide their employees with up to 7 paid sick days each year. This is an excellent first step, but is [limited in reach](#), even among organizations [contracting](#) with the federal government. In order to ensure all Wisconsin employees have access to paid sick days, it is necessary for Wisconsin to pass state legislation.

In early 2016, Wisconsin's State Legislature introduced a bill that would provide private sector workers with paid sick days under state law. Though the bill did not pass, the [provisions](#) of this bill serve as a great framework for future legislative action. The bill operated under the following framework:

- **The duration of paid sick day use and number of paid sick days provided annually:** The bill required that employees be able to earn up to nine sick days annually through a simple accrual system. The system would include a conversion rate between hours worked and hours of paid sick time, with a maximum of 72 hours of earned time off. According to Wisconsin's bill, workers could use paid sick days without risking loss of pay or loss of employment.
- **The scenarios for use of paid days off:** Employees should be able to use their paid sick days for more than just cases of illness. Under the proposed bill, paid sick days could be used to recover from [personal trauma](#) stemming from sexual assault, stalking, or domestic abuse, and could also be used to attend wellness appointments and seek preventive care.
- **The individuals for whom an employee can use a paid sick day:** Under Wisconsin's bill, paid sick days could be used to address the illness or preventive care of an employee's children and other family such as a spouse or parent. The bill includes a very generous definition of "family member", allowing employees to take time off to care for nearly anyone considered by the worker to be family.

The bill would also have allowed employers to keep their existing paid sick day policies, as long as they adhere to the rules laid out in the bill. Some additions and changes to the bill's current rules would make future legislation even more beneficial to employees. For instance, future proposals could permit employees to use paid sick time to grieve the loss of a loved one, and allow new employees to begin accruing sick time immediately instead of after 90 days of work (as is specified in the original bill).

How Can I Help Ensure Paid Sick Days for Employees in Wisconsin?

- Contact your [state legislators](#) and encourage them to support paid sick days legislation.
- Connect with organizations working to make paid sick days a reality in Wisconsin:
 - [9to5 Wisconsin](#)
- Learn more about the importance of paid sick days through the resources below.
 - [9to5 Fact Sheet: Paid Sick Days](#)
 - [National Partnership for Women & Families: Wisconsinites Need Paid Sick Days](#)
 - [The Economic Policy Institute Briefing Paper: The Need for Paid Sick Days](#)
 - [What's the Difference? Paid Sick Leave, FMLA, and Paid Family and Medical Leave](#)
 - [New York Times: The High Costs of Not Offering Paid Sick Leave](#)

Raise the Minimum Wage

The Issue

The current minimum wage in Wisconsin is \$7.25 per hour. The federal minimum wage (also \$7.25 per hour) was first enacted in 1938, but it has not been adequately adjusted to keep up with the rising costs of basic goods and services due to inflation. To put in perspective how far the minimum wage has fallen behind the real costs of living, [the inflation-adjusted value of the federal minimum wage in 2014 was 24 percent below its value in 1968](#).

Wisconsin law prohibits local units of government from enacting an ordinance that establishes a general minimum or “living” wage that is different than state law. However, there are exceptions to this prohibition for living wage ordinances that apply to local government employees or employees paid under contracts with local governments. Several Wisconsin counties and cities have enacted such ordinances.

Raising the minimum wage would benefit more than just the workers who would see a direct raise from the increase. Other low-wage workers who make slightly more than the amount to which the minimum wage is raised would also benefit from the positive “[ripple effect](#)” of raising the wage floor.

A significant portion of workers are employed in low-wage occupations that do not allow them to pay for their basic expenses. For example, in 2013, [approximately 700,000 Wisconsin workers](#) (approximately one-quarter of the workforce) earned wages below the federal poverty level for a family of four, which at the time was \$11.36 per hour for a full-time worker. A raise in the minimum wage combined with the positive “ripple effect” for other low wage workers would greatly improve the quality of life of these workers and their families.

Why is Raising the Minimum Wage Important to Women

- Women, especially women of color, would greatly benefit from raising the minimum wage because of their overrepresentation in low-wage occupations. For instance, according to the National Women’s Law Center, [thirty percent of working women—and 37 percent of working women of color—would get a raise if the minimum wage increased to \\$12.00 per hour by 2020](#).
- Women represent almost [60 percent](#) of “poverty wage” workers in Wisconsin.
- Increasing the minimum wage would also help working moms who provide for their families. About [one-third of Wisconsin single-moms](#) would get a raise if the federal minimum wage was raised to \$12 per hour by 2020.
- Raising the minimum wage can also help reduce the gender wage gap. According to [estimates from the President’s Council of Economic Advisors](#), increasing the federal minimum wage to \$10.10 an hour and indexing it to inflation could reduce gender wage gap by about 5 percent.

What Wisconsin Can Do

Despite Congress’ continued failure to raise the minimum wage, [several states](#) have enacted minimum wage increases in recent years. New York, Washington D.C. , and California have all enacted \$15 per hour minimum wages that will gradually go into effect in 2018, 2020, and 2023 respectively. Oregon passed a minimum wage increase that will vary by region and will be fully implemented in 2023, after which minimum wage increases will be indexed to inflation. 29 states have a higher minimum wage than the federal minimum wage and 11 states index their minimum wages to inflation. Wisconsin is not among these states, which makes raising our state minimum wage even more critical for lower-wage workers.

Three pieces of legislation that would raise Wisconsin's minimum wage were introduced during the 2015-2016 legislative session. If enacted, these bills would have done the following:

- Gradually increase the state minimum wage to [\\$10.10 per hour](#) and provides a modest increase in the minimum wage for tipped employees (who are only required to receive \$2.13 per hour in direct wages if that amount combined with the tips received at least equals the federal minimum wage).
- Gradually increase the state minimum wage to [\\$15 per hour](#), including tipped employees. This bill would also repeal the prohibition on local units of government from enacting local minimum or "living" wage ordinances.
- Gradually increase the [separate minimum wage for tipped employees](#) until it reaches the same level as the general minimum wage.

Effective and exciting advocacy for raising the minimum wage is also taking place in our communities.

Organizations like [Wisconsin Jobs Now](#) and [Fight for \\$15](#) have helped organize lower-wage workers and their allies across the state of Wisconsin to participate in rallies and protests urging state lawmakers to raise the state's minimum wage, local units of government to pass living wage ordinances that are allowable under current state law, and also individual businesses in traditionally low-wage employment sectors to voluntarily raise their employees' wage.

How Can I Help Make a Higher Minimum Wage a Reality in Wisconsin?

There are lots of ways you can help make a higher minimum wage a reality in Wisconsin.

- ✓ Call or email you [state legislators](#) to urge them to support legislation that would increase the minimum wage
- ✓ Connect with organizations in Wisconsin already working on increasing the state's minimum wage and organizing low-wage workers and their allies to urge individual businesses to increase their employees' wage:
 - [Wisconsin Jobs Now](#)
 - [Fight for \\$15](#)
- ✓ Learn more about why increasing the minimum wage is important for women's economic security with these resources:
 - [Center on Wisconsin Strategy and Economic Policy Institute: *Raise the Floor Wisconsin*](#)
 - [White House Report: *The Impact of Raising the Minimum Wage on Women*](#)
 - [National Women's Law Center: *Fair Pay for Women Requires a Fair Minimum Wage*](#)

Expand and Strengthen BadgerCare

The Issue

As originally passed, the Affordable Care Act (ACA) required all state Medicaid (known as “BadgerCare” in Wisconsin) programs to provide health insurance coverage to all adults under age 65 who live in a household with income up to 138% of the [federal poverty level](#). In order to help states afford Medicaid eligibility expansion, the ACA also provides enhanced federal matching funds for any newly eligible groups of people who did not previously qualify for a state Medicaid program. The federal matching rate pays for 100% of benefit costs in 2016 and eventually tapers down to 90% of costs in 2020 and all subsequent years. In Wisconsin, the federal government currently pays for [58%](#) of most Medicaid benefit costs, so the enhanced federal rate would result in a significant increase in federal aid to the state.

The 2012 Supreme Court case *NFIB v. Sebelius* made Medicaid expansion optional for states. As a result, [19](#) states, including Wisconsin, still have not expanded their Medicaid programs under the ACA, which has unnecessarily increased the number of low-income people who are without health insurance.

An estimated [83,000](#) Wisconsinites would gain access to health insurance coverage under BadgerCare if Wisconsin expanded the program under the ACA. If Wisconsin continues to reject BadgerCare expansion, doing so will cost Wisconsin taxpayers approximately \$392 million during the 2017-2019 budget period alone.

Why is Expanding BadgerCare Important to Women?

- [Low-income, uninsured women](#) are more likely to forego health care because of cost, are less likely to have a regular source of care, and utilize preventive services at lower rates than low-income women with health insurance.
- In [2015](#), 8.7% of Wisconsin women age 18-64 were uninsured and 12.5% of Wisconsin women did not receive health care at some point because of cost.
- States that have expanded Medicaid under the ACA have reduced [racial disparities](#) in their uninsured rates, which is particularly important in Wisconsin given the [significant racial health outcome and access to care disparities](#) that exist in the state.
- Low-income women who do not have access to BadgerCare coverage often have to rely on a [patchwork](#) of care programs in order to receive the health care they need. For example, many of these women may have to go to publicly-funded safety net clinics in order to receive reproductive health care services. Unfortunately, these centers are unable to [meet the demand](#) for services. Expanding BadgerCare would allow thousands more Wisconsin women to have access to comprehensive health care.

What Wisconsin Can Do

Wisconsin [should expand BadgerCare](#) under the ACA to cover all adults who earn up to 138% of the Federal Poverty Level as soon as possible. Full BadgerCare expansion on January 1, 2017 would allow an additional 83,000 Wisconsinites to receive health care insurance under the program and would save Wisconsin approximately [\\$834 million](#) over the next six years.

[Legislation](#) that would fully expand BadgerCare under the ACA was introduced during the 2015-2016 legislative session. Unfortunately, it failed to pass, but will likely be reintroduced during the 2017-2018 legislative session.

In light of the potential changes the incoming Congress and President-elect have promised to make to the ACA, expanding eligibility for BadgerCare has become even more important. Wisconsin [reduced Medicaid eligibility for parents](#) in 2014, which caused about 60,000 people to lose their BadgerCare coverage. Proponents of this change argued that those who lost BadgerCare coverage could purchase subsidized private insurance through the federal Marketplace. However, if Congress takes actions that repeal the Marketplace or cause it to collapse, the failure of Wisconsin lawmakers to expand BadgerCare eligibility would substantially increase our state's uninsured rate and would be a cruel blow to the parents whose eligibility was terminated in 2014.

Even if the ACA is eventually repealed, the Act's enhanced federal Medicaid funding [will likely stay in effect](#) for at least a couple of years. With that in mind, Wisconsin could still expand BadgerCare and take the increased federal funding and add it to the state's Medicaid Trust Fund – which would provide a cushion that would allow state policymakers to continue the higher eligibility level for adults after the enhanced federal funding is ended.

How Can I Help Make BadgerCare Expansion a Reality in Wisconsin?

There are lots of ways you can help make BadgerCare expansion a reality in Wisconsin.

- ✓ Call or email you [state legislators](#) to urge them to support legislation that would fully expand BadgerCare under the ACA
- ✓ Connect with organizations in Wisconsin already working on BadgerCare expansion:
 - [The Public Policy Institute](#)
 - [The Wisconsin Council on Children and Families](#)
- ✓ Learn more about why BadgerCare expansion is important for the health of women in Wisconsin:
 - [The Kaiser Family Foundation: *Women and Health Care in the Early Years of the Affordable Care Act*](#)
 - [The Wisconsin Budget Project Blog: *The Rapidly Mounting Evidence Supporting Medicaid Expansion*](#)
 - [The National Women's Law Center: *What the Medicaid Eligibility Expansion Means for Women*](#)

Ensure Access to Comprehensive, Medically Accurate Reproductive Health Care

The Issue

Ensuring that women have access to comprehensive reproductive health care services results in a wide range of [direct medical benefits](#) to women, including reduced unintended pregnancies, improved maternal health, and more effective diagnosis and treatment of sexually transmitted infections. Access to reproductive health care also [increases](#) women's economic security, educational attainment, and employment opportunities. Public policies that promote access to comprehensive reproductive health care also have enormous [economic and social value](#) to our communities, from reducing poverty to improving the societal status of women.

Despite these well documented benefits, there has been a [tidal wave](#) of state-level political assaults on access to reproductive health care that began after the 2010 elections. Unfortunately, Wisconsin has been at the forefront of this trend. Since 2011, Wisconsin has enacted a wide array of restrictions on access to reproductive health care. A near total ban on abortions after 20 weeks of gestation, mandating that women receive medically unnecessary ultrasounds before receiving abortion care, family planning funding restrictions for federal Title X clinics and reduced birth control prescription reimbursement to family planning centers, are only a few of the [many restrictions on access to care](#) that have been passed.

Many of these restrictions are not grounded in [medical evidence](#) and are opposed by the [mainstream medical](#) and [public health](#) communities. Unfortunately, these restrictions create real, and sometimes insurmountable, barriers to accessing reproductive health care for many women in Wisconsin. In addition to these political restrictions, many women and health care professionals face harassment, and sometimes even [violence](#), when they try to access or provide care from a small minority of extremist opponents of abortion. This legitimate fear of harassment and intimidation serves as a [deterrent to professionals](#) who would otherwise be willing to provide much-needed care and to women who wish to obtain care. This unique combination of political restrictions on access to care and an environment that can be intimidating to both patients and healthcare professionals is incredibly detrimental to women who wish to access a fundamental aspect of health care.

This unprecedented wave of political attacks on women's access to reproductive health care has spurred advocacy organizations that support access to comprehensive reproductive health care to begin formulating a positive, [proactive](#) vision of how states can begin to create a policy environment that ensures everyone has the right to make their own reproductive healthcare decisions free from harassment, intimidation, political interference, or [false information](#).

Why is Improving Access to Reproductive Health Care Important to Women?

- Access to comprehensive reproductive health care is an [essential component](#) to the overall health of women, which in turn impacts community health.
- Medically unnecessary restrictions on access to abortion create substantial barriers to care for women seeking abortion care, especially [low-income women](#) who cannot afford the costs of missing work, child care, travel, or lodging that are associated with mandatory waiting periods or clinic closures.
- Access to abortion care and clinic safety are greatly intertwined in Wisconsin. After a nationwide safety assessment of all of their clinics that was motivated by a shooting at a Colorado clinic, Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin decided it had to [close its Appleton clinic](#) because the site was not large enough to be adequately retrofitted to meet new safety guidelines. As of 2016, only three abortion clinics remain in Wisconsin: two in Milwaukee and one in Madison.

What Wisconsin Can Do

Despite its troubling legislative track record since 2011, Wisconsin has also been at the national forefront of proactive reproductive health policy activism. Wisconsin introduced first-of-its-kind legislation in 2015 to protect a patient's right to receive medically accurate, comprehensive reproductive health care in a setting free of harassment and intimidation. The "[Patients Reproductive Health Act](#)" provides a helpful roadmap for what states can do to ensure reproductive health care decisions are made by patients in consultation with their health care professionals without undue interference from politicians. Some key provisions of the Patients Reproductive Health Act include:

- Create robust legal protections for a patient's right to receive medically accurate care and a health care professional's right to provide medically accurate care.
- Repeal existing reproductive health care laws and regulations that restrict access to care and are not grounded in medical science or accepted standards of care.
- Enact protections for patients and health care professionals against threats of force and physical obstruction of reproductive health facilities that are consistent with existing First Amendment rights of freedom of expression and association. For example, Wisconsin could pass a state version of the federal [Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act](#), which is an existing federal statute that has successfully reduced unduly threatening or obstructive behavior at some clinics across the nation.

Unfortunately, the Patients Reproductive Health Act [failed to pass](#) during the 2015-2016 legislative session. However, many provisions of the bill will be reintroduced during the 2017-2018 legislative session.

How Can I Help Make Expanding Access to Reproductive Health Care a Reality in Wisconsin?

There are lots of ways you can help make expanding access to Reproductive Health Care a reality in Wisconsin.

- ✓ Call or email your [state legislators](#) to urge them to support the Patients Reproductive Health Act
- ✓ Connect with organizations already working on expanding access to care in Wisconsin:
 - [Planned Parenthood Advocates of Wisconsin](#)
 - [The Wisconsin Alliance for Women's Health](#)
- ✓ Learn more about state restrictions on access to reproductive health care and why access to reproductive health care is important to women:
 - [Guttmacher Policy Review: The Broad Benefits of Investing in Sexual and Reproductive Health](#)
 - [The National Women's Law Center: Reproductive Health Is Part of the Economic Health of Women and Their Families](#)
 - [National Partnership for Women and Families, Bad Medicine: How a Political Agenda is Undermining Women's Health Care](#)

Help Protect Confidentiality for Insured Dependents

The Issue

The passage of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) allowed children to be covered as dependents under their parents' health insurance until age 26. The act also helped to increase opportunity for coverage of other dependents. However, concerns remain regarding the disclosure of sensitive health services to other family members or partners with whom dependents share insurance. Current state and federal laws combined with private sector insurance billing and notification practices create significant barriers to protecting the privacy of insured dependents. For example, when insurance companies send Explanation of Benefits (EOBs) to an insurance policyholder that provides notice about medical care received by an insured dependent, this can represent a significant breach of privacy for the insured dependent who sought medical care, especially in cases where the insured dependent has accessed more sensitive health care services such as mental or reproductive health care.

[Because of the Affordable Care Act, 6.1 million American young adults \(aged 19-25\) have gained insurance coverage.](#) Young adults on their parents' policies are less [likely to access](#) needed care if they know that such care will not be confidential. Protecting confidentiality is also a concern in abusive households or relationships, as insured dependents who access care could be subject to threats or further abuse in the event that the nature of the medical services that they received were revealed. [This is true for both children who are insured through their parents and adults who are insured through their spouse or partner.](#)

Why is Ensuring Patient Confidentiality Important to Women?

- Meaningful access to confidential family planning services, mental health services, treatment for substance abuse disorders, domestic violence counseling, and other potentially sensitive health services is important for the overall health and wellbeing of women and girls. Many women and girls [forego such care due to confidentiality concerns.](#)
- Many women rely on their partners for health insurance coverage. [Nationally, 1 out of 3 of women experience intimate partner violence.](#) In many such scenarios, the disclosure of sensitive health services sought by victims from an Explanations of Benefits form or other the health insurance communications can place the victim at risk of further harm.
- When patients forego necessary care, there is a [strong possibility](#) of adverse health outcomes, many of which could have long-term consequences. Protecting insured dependent confidentiality is imperative to the short- and long-term health and wellbeing of women and girls.

What Wisconsin Can Do

Several states have passed or introduced legislation to protect privacy for insured dependents, including [Maryland](#), Illinois, and [Massachusetts](#). These proposals include provisions that limit when a summary of payments or an Explanation of Benefits (EOB) can be sent out to policyholders and prohibit summary of payments forms from being sent out if the insured has no remaining financial obligation for the services received.

The Massachusetts bill specifically allows insured dependents to elect where and how they would like summary of payments forms to be sent and to request that summary of payments forms not be distributed at all. Finally, the bill prohibits insurance carriers from divulging the nature of sensitive health services--such as contraception, testing and treatment for sexually transmitted infections (STI's), mental health services, domestic violence

counseling, pregnancy-related care, and counseling for alcohol and other drug abuse--on summary of payments or EOB forms.

Wisconsin should follow the lead of other states and pass legislation that would help to protect insured dependents' privacy to the fullest extent possible. Wisconsin should adopt legislation that would do the following:

- a. Mandate that patients are offered forms to request an alternate address for insurance communications that must be honored by insurance companies
- b. Mandate that no EOB form be sent out to insurance policyholders detailing the nature of services that their dependent received if there is no remaining financial obligation unless requested by the insured dependent
- c. Notify each dependent of services available that are not subject to cost-sharing
- d. Implement a training program to educate insurers and health care professionals on the requirements proposed by the bill

How Can I Help Make Ensuring Confidentiality for Insured Dependents a Reality in Wisconsin?

There are a variety of ways that you could help to ensure confidentiality for all insured dependents in Wisconsin.

- ✓ Call or email your [state legislators](#) to urge them to support the patient confidentiality bill when it is introduced
- ✓ Connect with organizations in Wisconsin already working to protect patient confidentiality:
 - [Wisconsin Alliance for Women's Health](#)
- ✓ Learn more about why patient confidentiality is important for the health of women in Wisconsin
 - [The University of California San Francisco Patient Confidentiality Policy Brief](#)
 - [The Guttmacher Institute's Report on Patient Confidentiality](#)
 - [Advocates for Youth: Youth Confidentiality in the Affordable Care Act](#)

Make Workplaces Friendlier to Breastfeeding Moms

The Issue

The health benefits of breastfeeding for babies and mothers are well documented. Babies who are breastfed exclusively are [less likely](#) to experience illnesses such as ear infections, diarrhea, and pneumonia. In addition, children who were breastfed are [less likely](#) to become obese later in childhood and into adulthood. Mothers who breastfeed also experience both [short- and long-term](#) health benefits, including reduced likelihood of postpartum depression, cardiovascular disease, and certain types of cancer. Breastfeeding also provides an opportunity for bonding for the entire family, including fathers and other children.

Medical professionals and public health officials have come to recognize the importance of promoting and supporting breastfeeding. In fact, [the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Institute of Medicine, and the World Health Organization all recommend](#) exclusive breastfeeding for approximately 6 months, with continuation of breastfeeding for 1 year or longer as mutually desired by the mother and infant. However, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), many women who are not medically prevented from breastfeeding have difficulty achieving these recommended guidelines. In [2011](#), about 79 percent of U.S. newborn infants started to breastfeed, but only 49 percent were breastfeeding at 6 months and 27 percent were breastfeeding at 12 months.

Inadequate workplace breastfeeding policies and laws serve as major obstacles that prevent many new mothers from starting or continuing breastfeeding. Women now make up approximately half of the U.S. workforce (48 percent in Wisconsin), [and two-thirds of working women return to work](#) within three months of giving birth. Many workplaces and many of our labor laws have not adequately evolved to accommodate breastfeeding moms' needs for break time and private space in order to express milk when they return to work.

Strong evidence exists to suggest that improved employer support for breastfeeding moms will greatly increase the likelihood that working moms will both start breastfeeding their new children and continue to do so for six months or longer. Not only do such policies have significant health and emotional benefits for mothers and children, but they are also good for businesses. [Research](#) indicates that [employers who make accommodations for breastfeeding moms](#) enjoy a "reduction in company health care costs, lower employee absenteeism, reduction in employee turnover, and increased employee morale and productivity." Our communities and the economy benefit from such policies as well. According to the [U.S. Surgeon General](#), increased compliance with breastfeeding guidelines would result in significantly lower health care costs for newborns.

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) included important new workplace protections for many breastfeeding moms. [Under the ACA](#), employers must provide breastfeeding moms who are hourly wage earners a reasonable break time and a private, non-bathroom location to express milk for one year after the child's birth. However, many workers are excluded from these protections. The ACA provides a limited exception for businesses with 50 or fewer employees if they can demonstrate that compliance with the law could create an undue hardship. In addition, women who have "[salaried](#)" positions, such as those with managerial and professional jobs, are not covered by the law. Approximately 40 percent of women workers are salaried.

Why are Workplace Breastfeeding Accommodations Important to Women?

- Mothers who breastfeed experience both [short- and long-term](#) health benefits, including reduced likelihood of postpartum depression, cardiovascular disease, and certain types of cancer.

- Support for breastfeeding moms helps promote the health of newborns and children. Babies who are breastfed exclusively are [less likely](#) to experience illnesses such as ear infections, diarrhea, and pneumonia. In addition, children who were breastfed are [less likely](#) to become obese later in childhood and into adulthood.

What Wisconsin Can Do

In addition to the workplace protections provided by the ACA mentioned above, [28 states and the District of Columbia](#) have passed workplace breastfeeding accommodation laws. Many of these laws mirror the ACA's provisions, but some states provide additional protections or remedies for employees whose rights were violated. For example, California's law is seen as a [model](#) for creating strong workplace protections for breastfeeding moms and even has anti-discrimination laws prohibiting discriminatory practices in employment related to breastfeeding.

Wisconsin has yet to pass a state breastfeeding accommodation law. However, during the 2015-2016 legislative session, the [bipartisan "Healthy Babies, Working Mothers Act"](#) was introduced. If passed, the bill would:

- Enshrine the ACA's workplace breastfeeding protections into Wisconsin law
- Require an employer to provide access to an electrical outlet, running water, and a refrigerator for the storage of breast milk
- Employers with less than 50 employees would be exempt from the first two provisions if the employer could demonstrate that complying with these provisions would create an undue business hardship
- Finally, the bill would require if an employee receives employer-sponsored health care benefits that are dependent on the number of hours worked by the employee, the employer must treat any unpaid break time taken by the employee to express breast milk as paid work time for purposes of determining that eligibility.

The bill received a committee hearing but did not pass before the end of the legislative session. The legislation will most likely be reintroduced during the 2017-2018 legislative session.

How Can I Help Improve Workplace Breastfeeding Accommodations in Wisconsin?

There are lots of ways you can help improve workplace breastfeeding accommodations in Wisconsin.

- ✓ Call or email your [state legislators](#) to urge them to support the Healthy Babies, Working Mothers Act
- ✓ Connect with organizations in Wisconsin already working on policies to support breastfeeding mothers:
 - [Wisconsin Breastfeeding Coalition](#)
 - [African American Breastfeeding Network](#)
 - [Wisconsin Women's Network Policy Institute](#)
- ✓ Learn more about why workplace breastfeeding accommodations are important for the health of women in Wisconsin:
 - [The American Academy of Pediatrics Policy Statement: Breastfeeding and the Use of Human Milk](#)
 - [The Network for Public Health Law: Breastfeeding in the Workplace](#)
 - [The Center for Law and Social Policy \(CLASP\): Public Policies to Support Breastfeeding](#)

Implement Effective Teen Dating Violence Prevention and Response Policies

The Issue

[Teen dating violence](#) is a form of intimate partner violence that can include physical, sexual, psychological, or emotional violence within a dating relationship where at least one of the partners is a teen. Such abuse can also include stalking behavior and can occur in person or electronically.

Teen dating violence is a prevalent problem both nationally and in Wisconsin. According to the Center for Disease Control's (CDC) [Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance — United States, 2013](#) survey, of the female high school students who had dated or gone out with someone in the previous year, 13% experienced some form of physical dating violence, which is defined to include being hit, slammed into something, or injured with an object or weapon on purpose by an intimate partner. This compares to a rate of 7.4% for male students. Wisconsin's physical teen dating violence rates were 10.3% for females and 6.7% for males, respectively.

The CDC survey also measured the amount of sexual dating violence experienced by teens. Nationally, 14.4% of female students had been kissed, touched, or physically forced to have sexual intercourse when they did not want to by someone they were dating or going out with one or more times during the 12 months before the survey. This compares to a rate of 6.4% of male students. Wisconsin's sexual teen dating violence rates were 15.7% for females and 4% for males, respectively.

Teen dating violence is associated with many serious [short- and long-term health risks](#). Victims of teen dating violence have a [higher risk](#) of substance abuse, eating disorders, suicidal thoughts, depression, and future victimization.

Despite the prevalence and associated risks of teen dating violence, Wisconsin has not passed legislation to specifically address teen dating violence prevention.

Why is Addressing Teen Dating Violence Important to Girls and Women?

- Wisconsin girls are [disproportionately](#) victimized by teen dating violence. Wisconsin high school girls experience physical teen dating violence at a 54% higher rate than high school boys. Wisconsin high school girls experience sexual teen dating violence at almost four times the rate as did high school boys.
- [Nationally](#), females are twice as likely as males to be victimized by teen cyber dating abuse.
- Victims of teen dating violence have a [higher risk](#) of substance abuse, eating disorders, suicidal thoughts, depression, and future victimization. Implementing effective teen dating violence prevention and response policies will help reduce the incidence of these serious health risks.

What Wisconsin Can Do

According to the [National Conference of State Legislatures](#), at least 22 states have laws that urge or require school boards to develop curriculum about teen dating violence. These laws vary widely in what, if any, educational content is mandated to be included in any such curriculum. Several other states suggest or mandate that schools implement specific policies and responses to reports of teen dating violence.

There are many [evidence-based policies](#) that states can implement in order to help prevent and effectively respond to incidents of teen dating violence. According to [End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin](#), "school-based violence

prevention programs are most effective when they combine education to students with policies that create a supportive environment for victims to report abuse and seek help.”

As noted above, Wisconsin does not currently have any laws that specifically address teen dating violence. However, bipartisan, [comprehensive teen dating violence prevention legislation](#) was introduced during the 2015-2016 legislative session. If passed, the bill would do the following:

- Direct schools to integrate teen dating violence prevention education into classroom instruction for middle-school and high-school students.
 - The bill would require the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to create a model curriculum and response policy, both of which individual school districts could choose to adopt. If a school district chose not to adopt the model DPI policies and curriculum, then the school district would have to develop its own policy and curriculum to adopt.
- Set guidelines for schools’ response to teen dating violence to create an atmosphere in which victims can get help and abuse is not tolerated in order to help break the cycle of abuse.
- Provide teen dating violence training for teachers and administrators.

The bill received a committee hearing but did not pass before the end of the legislative session. The legislation will most likely be reintroduced during the 2017-2018 legislative session.

How Can I Help Ensure Wisconsin Addresses Teen Dating Violence?

There are lots of ways you can help address teen dating violence in Wisconsin.

- ✓ Call or email your [state legislators](#) to urge them to support evidence-based teen dating violence prevention legislation
- ✓ Connect with organizations in Wisconsin already working to address teen dating violence:
 - [End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin](#)
- ✓ Learn more about how teen dating violence affects the health of girls and women in Wisconsin:
 - [End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin Teen Dating Violence Resource Page](#)
 - [National Coalition Against Domestic Violence: Dating Abuse and Teen Violence Fact Sheet](#)
 - [Center for Disease Control: Understanding Teen Dating Violence](#)

Implement Comprehensive Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Policies

The Issue

According to the [Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault](#), “child sexual abuse occurs when a child is exploited sexually by another person.” Child sexual abuse may take many forms, but is most often perpetrated by someone the child knows and trusts.

Child sexual abuse is an unfortunately prevalent problem in communities across the nation, and Wisconsin is no exception. The actual prevalence of child sexual abuse is [difficult to determine](#) because it is often [not reported](#) to law enforcement or human service agencies. There is general agreement by experts that the incidence of child sexual abuse is higher than what is reported to authorities, as sexual assault is widely recognized to be the most [underreported](#) violent crime.

Many states have recognized the serious consequences child sexual abuse has on both victims and their communities at large and have passed legislation aimed to prevent child sexual abuse. At least [26 states](#) have passed laws to either study child sexual abuse prevention programs or create child sexual abuse identification and prevention curriculum.

While the increased attention states have paid to addressing child sexual abuse is certainly welcome, many of the state legislative approaches to child sexual abuse prevention are [too narrowly tailored and based on unsuccessful prevention models](#). According to the [National Alliance to End Sexual Violence](#) (NAESV), many of these approaches “rely too heavily on children to prevent their own abuse and can promote a spirit of victim-blaming when children are unable to prevent abuse.” Such approaches fail to take into account the power and control imbalances between children and adults that help create the dynamics that contribute to abuse.

As a result, NAESV recommends that states adopt a more comprehensive policy approach to child sexual abuse prevention that focuses more attention on adult and societal responsibilities for preventing and responding to abuse.

Why is Addressing Child Sexual Abuse Important to Girls and Women?

- Research indicates that girls are [disproportionately](#) victimized by child sexual abuse. While estimates of the prevalence of child sexual abuse vary, [comprehensive](#) studies [indicate](#) that between 20-30% of girls and 5-15% of boys are a victim of child sexual abuse.
- Sexual abuse can have a [devastating](#) impact on a child’s [wellbeing and sense of self](#). Child victims often experience severe anxiety, problems with school, difficulty forming or maintaining healthy relationships, and a whole host of other adverse effects.
- The relationship between Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)—such as child sexual abuse—and [poor health](#) into adulthood are [well documented](#). Child sexual abuse is associated with higher levels of [long-term health problems](#), including many of the health problems listed in the point above, many of which can contribute to poor general health and chronic health conditions.

What Wisconsin Can Do

The Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault (WCASA) has created a detailed roadmap for policymakers who wish to take a comprehensive approach to child sexual abuse prevention. The report, entitled [10 Core Concepts for Child Sexual Abuse Prevention](#), suggests four elements that should be included to effectively address each core

concept along with research that provides a rationale for each specific recommendation. The 10 Core Concepts include:

- Sexual Health & Development
- Gender Socialization
- Intersections of Oppression
- Boundaries
- Empowerment & Body Ownership
- Pro-Social Behavior & Skills
- Understanding, Identifying & Responding to Trauma
- Bystander Intervention
- Information About Sexual Abuse
- Safety & Risk Reduction

While legislation that would require [child sexual abuse prevention curriculum be taught to children in Kindergarten through 6th grade](#) was introduced during the 2015-2016 legislative session, the bill did not incorporate the comprehensive approach advocated for by WCASA, NAESV, and other experts on child sexual abuse prevention.

At the current time, no comprehensive child sexual abuse prevention legislation has been introduced in Wisconsin. However, any such future legislation should be assessed on the basis of whether it takes a truly comprehensive approach to the issue and is grounded in evidence-based policies, such as those included in WCASA's "10 Core Concepts" model.

How Can I Help Ensure Wisconsin Adopts Comprehensive Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Policies?

There are lots of ways you can help promote comprehensive child sexual abuse prevention policies in Wisconsin.

- ✓ Call or email your [state legislators](#) to urge them to support evidence-based, comprehensive child sexual abuse prevention legislation.
- ✓ Connect with organizations in Wisconsin already working to address child sexual abuse prevention:
 - [The Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault](#)
- ✓ Learn more about how child sexual abuse affects the health of girls and women in Wisconsin and what can be done about the issue:
 - [WCASA: 10 Core Concepts for Child Sexual Abuse Prevention](#)
 - [National Alliance to End Sexual Violence Policy Statement: Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Policy and Erin's Law](#)
 - [WCASA Information Sheet: Child Sexual Abuse](#)
 - [National Sexual Violence Resource Center: Preventing Child Sexual Abuse Resources](#)