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WHAT OSSTF MEMBERS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT
NEGOTIATING CHILD-RELATED EMERGENCY LEAVE

1. All the statistical evidence collected by governments, social agencies, labour unions, and private and public sector employers shows that a vast majority of children, possibly as high as 90%, are in unregulated private child care situations. A recent all-employee survey in a large Metro Board shows the same situation.
2. Many people with children in need of care live in some terror of a breakdown in care arrangements, or of their children becoming ill. This type of stress interferes with productivity and morale.
3. When their child-care arrangements break down, limited options exist for emergencies:
 - about 5% have reliable back-up arrangements
 - school-age children often are "baby-sat" only during school hours, and are alone before and after school
 - for Pre-school children, most frequently, a parent takes a "sick" day. Employees in the survey referred to above said:
 - . child comes to work with me
 - . desperate call to relatives
 - . stay home, or landlady babysits
 - . spouse and I alternate staying home
 - . sometimes neighbour will take child
 - . child goes to grandparents
 - . my wife stays home
 - . try my in-laws
 - . take a sick day
 - . grandparents come from out of town
 - . take turns with spouse staying home
 - . take sick leave
 - . send him to school even if he's sick, cry a lot, and one of us stays home
4. A few emergency services exist. Costs range from \$45-\$60 per day for in-home care. These services are rare, and perhaps non-existent outside large cities.
5. Absence of provision for legitimate leave for child-related emergencies causes a dilemma for our vice-principal and principal colleagues. They must decide whether to insist a teacher lose a day's pay, or condone, permit or encourage subterfuge and deceit by teachers who use sick days to deal with the emergency.
6. Our elementary colleagues often find themselves dealing with sick children in class because there is no alternative for the parents except to send the child to school.

7. The Day Care Coalition, of which OSSTF is a member, recommended the following to the Ontario government:
- "Unions should continue to work toward clauses for childcare leave, ...and work for the implementation of longer paid maternity and paternity leave..."
8. The O.F.L., in its 1982 Bargaining Guide on Parental Rights and Daycare, recommends a Family Responsibility clause, e.g.:
- "An employee is entitled to ten days paid leave to be used for illness of immediate family members.
- Time off for medical/dental/school appointments for employees or for dependent children shall be permitted, up to a maximum of three days (or 24 hours)."
9. The June 1985 edition of CUPE's FACTS states:
- "... the workplace is changing (though all too slowly) to a more humane system which recognizes a parent's right to combine participation in the work force with care of children, and the need for working conditions which make it possible to do both..."
- Agreements which permit absence for illness of a child exist:
- in 42% of CUPE's agreements in the education sector
 - for over 25% of CUPE's municipal employees
10. Sweden permits up to 60 days per year at 90% pay for illness of child or of child's caregiver (children under 10), quoted from "Time To Deliver", Forum, Feb./85, by Ruth Baumann.
11. Evidence from Europe and the U.S., though limited, shows that employees on the average underutilize such leaves.
12. Preliminary findings of the 1985 Status of Women survey show:
- about 25% of 1600 respondents have children not yet in school full-time
 - about 15% have children under the age of 3
 - about 75% use unregulated, private care arrangements
- The needs of these members should not be ignored. Negotiating leave for this relatively small proportion of our membership will not be a high-cost item, and will recognize a long-standing and long-ignored need.
13. Our policy on child-related leaves is consistent with other leave policy, e.g., release for jury duty is beyond our control, as is compassionate leave in the case of bereavement, yet we negotiate such leaves wherever possible.

14. Comments which cast aspersions on the professionalism of our OSSTF colleagues who are parents by suggesting that such leave provisions will be abused are as unacceptable as any other form of teacher-bashing.
15. As professional educators, we claim an interest in ensuring that children receive protection and assistance to enable them to achieve their potential. Quality child care at all time is as much a need of our own children as it is of those whom we teach. We must not hesitate to negotiate conditions which benefit our own children.

by Shelagh Luka
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