Sick Child, School Note, Missed Work: New DrHouse Data Reveals the Hidden Burden of School Sick Days

Study finds children's telehealth visits are 3.2 times more likely to end with a doctor's note in the school year, when a sick child can also mean missed work.



DrHouse: 24/7 Telehealth

NEW YORK, NY, UNITED STATES, September 30, 2026 / EINPresswire.com/ -- When a child wakes up sick on a school morning, parents and guardians find themselves navigating more than a fever or cough. Often, they face school and employer documentation requirements, an unexpected healthcare visit, and the possibility of missing work, deadlines, and reassigning responsibilities while trying to get the doctor's note their child needs.

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>
> *Ergo Sooru*

New research from telehealth platform DrHouse, based on 5,780 completed pediatric telehealth visits, found that 35.9% of children's visits during the school year ended with a doctor's note, compared with just 11.3% during summer break, a 3.2x increase.

The outcome is an often-overlooked intersection between children's healthcare, school and employer attendance policies, and parents' ability to manage work responsibilities.

"This research shows how quickly a routine childhood illness can become a healthcare, school and workplace challenge for an entire family," said Ergo Sooru, CEO of DrHouse.

"Responsible attendance policies are important, but families also need practical ways to access appropriate care and documentation. By connecting parents and children with physicians from home, telehealth can help reduce unnecessary disruption while keeping the child's health at the

center of every decision."

The reality is, the impact begins before the school day does. During school months, 49.9% of children's telehealth visits booked on weekday mornings between 6:00 and 10:00 a.m. ended with a doctor's note, compared with 12.2% on weekend mornings.

For working parents, that can mean juggling before the first bell or the first meeting to determine whether their child should stay home, when is the appropriate time to notify school and work, arrange child care if parents can't take off work, contact a healthcare provider for immediate care, and communicate an unexpected absence or schedule change to an employer.

The study also found that the need for documentation increases as children get older. 41.9% of telehealth visits among high school-age patients ended with a note.

School requirements vary considerably by district. Schools may request medical documentation for extended absences, excused-absence coding, make-up work, returning after certain contagious illnesses, or physical education accommodations.

For families with limited access to healthcare, transportation challenges or inflexible work schedules, obtaining documentation can add another layer to an already stressful day. At DrHouse, physicians issue notes at their clinical discretion following an evaluation and when medically appropriate.

"Missing school is an important issue to address, and these findings clearly show that the demand for doctor's notes increases when children are in school," said Dr. Rob Chandler, a physician with DrHouse. "While documentation policies serve an important purpose, requiring families to visit an urgent care center or primary care office for a minor or improving illness can create real challenges. Appointments may not be immediately available, and parents may have to miss work and encounter financial strain simply to obtain a note. Telehealth offers families a faster, more accessible way to have their child evaluated and, when medically appropriate, receive the documentation they need without leaving home."

The findings raise a broader question for schools, healthcare providers and employers: How can systems support responsible school attendance without making a child's routine illness unnecessarily disruptive for an entire family?

About the Study
DrHouse analyzed 5,780 completed telehealth visits involving patients under 18 between February 29, 2024 and August 17, 2026. The research measures whether a treating physician issued documentation, not why a note was requested or whether a school required it. The observational findings reflect DrHouse users and should not be interpreted as nationally representative of all pediatric healthcare.

The full study, “School Notes in America: What Happens to Children’s Sick Days When the Bell Rings,” is available at drhouse.com/learn/research/school-notes-in-america/.

About DrHouse
DrHouse is a 24/7 telehealth platform available in all 50 states. Its licensed physicians provide urgent care, primary care, prescriptions with on-demand delivery and doctor's notes for work or school through virtual visits, so patients get care and paperwork without leaving home.

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