

A warrior against children's cancer! Kenji's legislative struggle



When [Kenji Lopez's](#) mother was diagnosed with cancer, he decided to fight this disease at her side.

“At that moment, I decided to get in the ring to fight at her side.”

Unfortunately, his mother died three years later due to the spread of the cancer. However, **Kenji didn't drop his guard and promised himself to keep fighting for other families.**

He then took up the fight against children's cancer. Kenji created the [Cancer Warriors de Mexico](#) foundation and has already achieved **major legislative reform on behalf of the parents of children with cancer.**



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FACING UP TO DISEASE

“You never think that your loved ones or you yourself will ever have a complicated disease like cancer,” he tells CONECTA.

“Then, you suddenly realize you’re more fragile than you thought.”

During the time of his mother’s cancer, Kenji approached cancer foundations and one day attended an event for children with cancer. This left an indelible mark on him.

“Children don’t understand at first what this diagnosis means, beyond taking them away from their usual activities to enter a hospital,” he says.

“This event in 2015 was for underprivileged children. The situation was particularly grim for these families, as they lacked financial resources and had to deal with the disease.”

“Children don’t understand at first what this diagnosis means.”

Kenji then redoubled his efforts and founded [Cancer Warriors](#).



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THE PROBLEM: PARENTS FIRED FROM THEIR JOBS

“During our visits to the hospitals, we realized that something was wrong. Working parents of children with cancer were getting fired from their jobs for being absent.”

This lawyer, a graduate of Tec de Monterrey, explained how employers could terminate employment when workers were absent more than 3 times in 30 days.

“Obviously, these parents were absent more often. They’d lose their jobs, their income, and their Social Security. Then their children no longer had the right to hospital care.”

Also holding a master’s degree in Public Administration and Public Policy, Kenji managed to change the law to support parents through [Cancer Warriors of Mexico](#).

THE SOLUTION: A CHANGE IN THE LAW

Kenji and his team sought to reform the Federal Labor Act, the Social Security Act, and the ISSSTE Act.

“We presented this initiative on February 15, 2018, a significant date as it is International Childhood Cancer Day,” he says.

The **reform** was **approved on July 4, 2019**. Hundreds of **parents began to take advantage of** the benefit, applying for leaves of absence from the **Mexican Social Security Institute (IMSS)** and the **Government Workers' Social Security and Services Institute (ISSSTE)**.

The biggest challenge, this **Tec graduate** admits, was to get approval for allocating **450 million pesos** from the **federal budget** to support **more than 9,700 parents** who qualified for a leave of absence.

Now, moms and dads of **children under the age of 16** with cancer can:

- *Request up to 28 days' leave on 60 percent of their salary.*
- *Obtain the number of leaves of absence necessary within a period of 3 years without exceeding 364 days.*

There are three situations in which **workers can request a leave of absence**:

- *when their children have to be hospitalized,*
- *when bed rest is required at a critical stage of treatment, or*
- *when they receive palliative treatment.*

https://twitter.com/cancerwarriors_/status/1222271146869121031

ASSISTANCE IN HOSPITALS AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

In addition to the legal initiative, the **foundation has other programs to help children with cancer, such as**:

- *The **Defeating Monsters Mini-Olympics**: About 50 children and their families are invited to a day of activities and sporting events with prizes in a park.*
- ***Hospital Visits** that are conducted on a quarterly basis, mainly to the **National Pediatrics Institute** and the **Federico Gómez Children's Hospital of Mexico** in Mexico City.*
- ***Foot Warriors**, a program to **donate limb prostheses** to minors who have had amputations due to bone cancer.*

<https://twitter.com/kenjilopezcueva/status/1225088871081435137>

THE LAW: HOPE FOR CHILDREN

For Kenji, having brought about changes to three laws is **an achievement that signifies hope**.

"Because mothers and fathers keep their income and they can accompany their children, there's a greater chance for children to improve," he says.

Kenji has been **invited to present the case** at various forums such as the **2019 World Cancer Leaders' Summit** in Kazakhstan.

Kenji met his father after the laws had been reformed and handed him a copy of the Official Gazette. *“Dad, I’m returning a little bit of what you sacrificed to put me through college,”* he told him.

*“When I was studying at the Tec, the ideology of my alma mater was always focused on being proactive, on **building our own platforms** to have a **social impact**. Maybe I thought my career was a long way off in those years. Today, I say it’s starting to come together”*, he concludes.

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