



2021

YEAR IN REVIEW

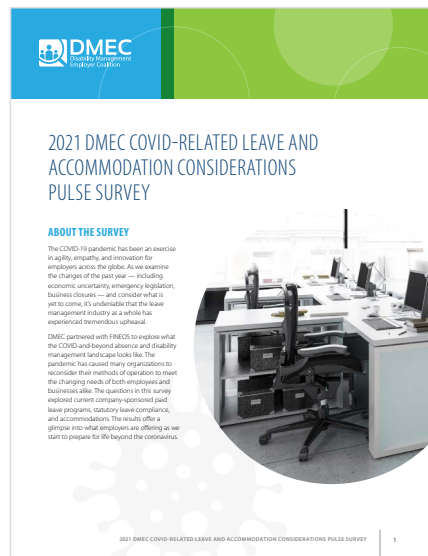


DMEC
Disability Management
Employer Coalition

The second year of the pandemic brought a variety of unique challenges for employers across the country — including rising ADA accommodation requests, shifting return to the workplace plans, expanding mental health concerns, and evolving vaccine mandates and policies. This report offers a look back on 2021 and explores how DMEC supported the absence and disability management community through education, resources, and networking opportunities.

Throughout this report, look for key **“2021 By the Numbers”** stats and information on DMEC’s membership, education, and engagement.

**JANUARY
2021**



In January, we conducted the **2021 DMEC COVID-Related Leave Accommodation and Considerations Pulse Survey** to explore current company-sponsored paid leave programs, statutory leave compliance, and accommodations. The results offered a glimpse into what employers were offering as they prepared for life beyond the coronavirus.

**FEBRUARY
2021**



We released the results of the **2020 DMEC Employer Leave Management Survey** in a webinar on Feb. 11 and a white paper on Mar. 22. The annual survey highlighted trends and employer

perspectives on regulatory leaves and state paid leave programs, and it reviewed practical application of return to work, accommodations, administrative processes, systems used to manage leave, staffing for insured and outsourced programs, and underlying plans in place.

976 memberships representing **16,436** absence and disability professionals

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MARCH
2021

During the five Wednesdays in March, attendees from across the United States joined us for the **2021 DMEC Virtual Compliance Conference**. Expert speakers shared insights into the COVID-19 legal landscape and discussed best practices for return-to-the-workplace efforts and evolving workplace challenges. The final day of the conference wrapped up with an inspiring keynote session on embracing change from Humanitarian and Survivor Jessica Buchanan.

2 virtual conferences,
37 sessions,
and 702 total attendees

We also launched **DMECommunities** — our online networking groups — that provide members with a welcoming environment to connect with other absence management professionals. After joining a group, members can share ideas and resources, seek insight and feedback, and ask/answer questions on topics such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), mental health, return to work, technology, and more.

In the March issue of @Work magazine, we introduced **“Employer Perspective”** articles which highlight best practices and professional development tips culled from an employer’s unique experience as an absence and disability management professional.

APRIL
2021

In April, we provided members — both new to the field and those that have been in the industry for several years — an opportunity to return to the fundamentals of absence management with our **FMLA Basics** and **ADA Basics webinars**. Attendees had the chance to explore best practices for administering a compliant FMLA program and developing affective ADA accommodation processes.

MAY
2021

In recognition of Mental Health Awareness month, we released a series of resources employers could apply to their workplaces as well as their everyday lives to address mental health — including a **10-minute mindfulness recording**, led by Dr. Ruth Wolever, a **Self-Care Worksheet**, and a **live Q&A session** in the **DMECommunities’** Mental Health group.

In May, we also released the **2021 DMEC ADA Accommodations Pulse Survey** to better understand how the pandemic was impacting the volume and types of accommodations requests.

SELF-CARE WORKSHEET

CONSIDER THESE TIPS AND APPROACHES TO SUPPORT YOUR MENTAL WELLNESS AND OVERALL WELL-BEING. Use the notes section to personalize how you'll put each tip into practice. You can also share these tips with your teams or families to enable discussions on how to better support each other.

SELF-CARE TIP	SAMPLE SELF-CARE ACTIONS	PERSONAL SELF-CARE GOAL / NOTES
TIP 1 Rest and Recharge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take a five-minute break between meetings. Go for a 15-minute walk in the afternoon. Take an extended meal break. Get more sleep. Reduce screen time. 	What will you start doing to rest and recharge?
TIP 2 Practice Saying No	It can be difficult to say "no" to requests. However, if you take a thoughtful approach based on your values and your goals — and choose your words carefully — even demanding people will hear you.	What or who will you practice saying no to? Or when (in what situations) will you practice saying no?
TIP 3 Treat Yourself with Compassion	If you tend toward negative thoughts, work to reduce them. It helps to literally say "stop" out loud, followed by complimenting yourself. Imagine what you would say to a friend dealing with the problems or feelings you're facing. Be a good friend to yourself.	What's a compliment about yourself that you can state when you start to experience negative thoughts?
TIP 4 Get Moving	Walking, stretching, and doing simple exercises can be great for your fitness and allow opportunities for social connection. Even activities like doing chores or cleaning up with your family can be fun activities that also get you moving.	What activities do you like to do that will help you get moving?
TIP 5 Seek Help If You Need It	Remember that no one can do it all. Consider asking your partner, family, friends, co-workers, neighbors, or children for help or a break. Or consider requesting a flexible schedule from your manager. Utilize an employee assistance program if available. It may offer a variety of services from support for parents to counseling or assistance for managing mental health or substance use issues.	Who can help when needed? What resources or benefits is your employer providing that would help support you?

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JUNE
2021



In June, we released the **2021 DMEC State of Absence Management Pulse Survey** to provide a framework for understanding what areas of absence management were most significantly impacted by the pandemic, how employees have responded, and how businesses are adjusting their programs.

The **Return to the Workplace Checklist** was also released to support employers in successfully returning employees to the workplace and a live Q&A on the same topic was held in the DMECommunities' Mental Health group.

JULY
2021

In July, we hosted our first-ever **DMEC Virtual Vendor Showcase** to support employers in their vendor selection process. Over two days of live demonstrations, six absence management software providers, mental health partners, third-party administrators, and consultants showcased their current offerings.

We also released the **2021 DMEC Paid Family and Medical Leave Pulse Survey** to explore how employers were preparing for the future of PFML and how impacted employers are managing the current laws. Additionally, the survey offered insight into how employers are involved in shaping the trajectory of the PFML landscape.



AUGUST
2021

Hundreds of employers and suppliers gathered virtually during five days in August to attend the **2021 DMEC Virtual Annual Conference** which focused on building a stronger workforce. Expert speakers provided best practices and considerations for workforce well-being, the employee experience, data & technology, and leave & accommodations.

During the conference, we announced the **2021 DMEC Emerging Leader Award** winners, Erin Ludy and Lai-Sahn Hackett, as well as the **2021 DMEC Partnership Award** winner, Peter Mead.

We also released the **2021 DMEC Employer Leave Management Survey** with additional questions around plan design and employer policy benchmarking.

553,278
website
page views

SEPTEMBER 2021

DMEC released its first microcredential course, the **ADA Accommodation Process**, focused on how to navigate employee accommodation requests effectively and confidently. Each interactive online course in this new program features real-life scenarios and knowledge checks as well as a digital badge and certificate upon successful completion — all designed to equip employers and suppliers with expertise in focused areas of absence and disability management.

Also in September, we released a **Telework Accommodation Request Flowcart** to identify the various steps in the interactive process when an employee requests a remote work accommodation. A live Q&A on the same topic was held in the *DMECommunities' Americans with Disabilities Act* group.

775 new CLMS registrations and 583 new CLMS designees

OCTOBER 2021

Based on member requests, we released eight **DMEC Benchmarking Reports** — a subset of the 2020 DMEC Employer Leave Management Survey — focused on plan design for workers' compensation, short-term disability, long-term disability, paid leave, time off, and other company programs. The reports serve as a tool for decision making for organizations as they consider plan and policy design.

In October, we also released a **Hybrid Workplace Checklist** to serve as a planning guide for effectively transitioning workforces to a stable and productive hybrid structure. A live Q&A on the same topic was held in the *DMECommunities' Return to Work* group.

NOVEMBER/ DECEMBER 2021

DMEC announced the **return of in-person conferences** for 2022, and registration for the 2022 DMEC FMLA/ADA Employer Compliance Conference opened in November.

Over the four Wednesdays in December, we featured a series of on-demand **Quick Dive Webinars** focused on professional development topics including compassionate dialogue, remote work fatigue, mental health accommodation discussions, and difficult conversations. The series was designed to strengthen communication and leadership skills — whatever the individual's role in the organization.

774 Twitter followers, 831 Facebook followers, and 2,505 LinkedIn followers

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While a return to a “new normal” proved elusive for many organizations in 2021, DMEC remained committed to serving the ever-evolving needs of our members and larger community. We look forward to celebrating our 30th anniversary in 2022, and the remarkable achievements of our industry over the last three decades.