DMEC
2026 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Connecting the Dots: Leave and Accommodation Data Insights

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Food for Thought

What story would your leave and accommodation data tell if you looked at it all together instead of separately?



Traditional Approach

Program	Tracked By	Reviewed Separately
FMLA	Benefits	Yes
Accommodations	ADA Specialist	Yes
Return to Work	HR	Yes
STD/LTD	Benefits	Yes

So, who reconciles these when they overlap?



The Shift in Absence Management

The employee experience does not follow our organizational chart.

Then:

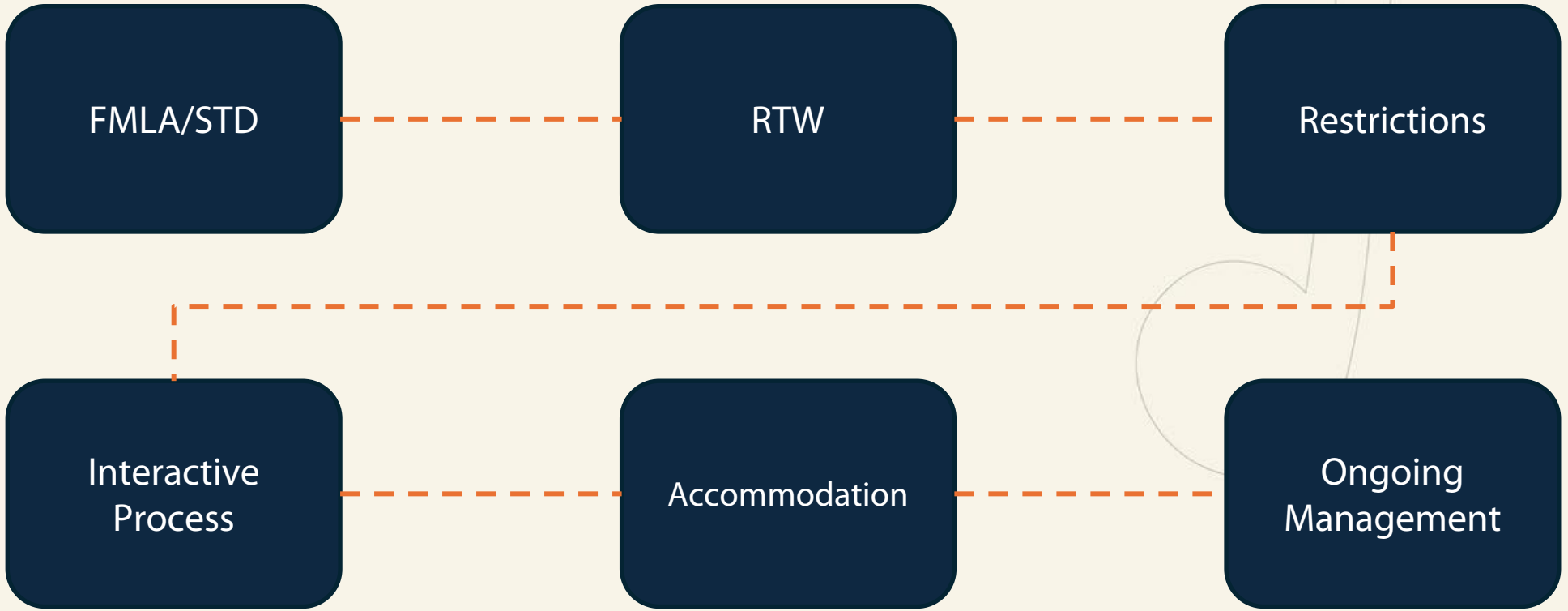
- Leave was a standalone event
- Accommodations were handled separately
- Return-to-work was the finish line

Now:

- Leave may be the beginning of a longer support journey
- Employees may move between programs
- Complexity is the new challenge



The Case Does Not End When Leave Ends



Challenges to the Traditional Approach

- Employees transitioning from leave to accommodation(s)
- Recurring absences
- Mental health trends
- Departments with higher leave/accommodation activity
- Increased administrative workload

Which of these do you think would be the most beneficial to understand in your organization?



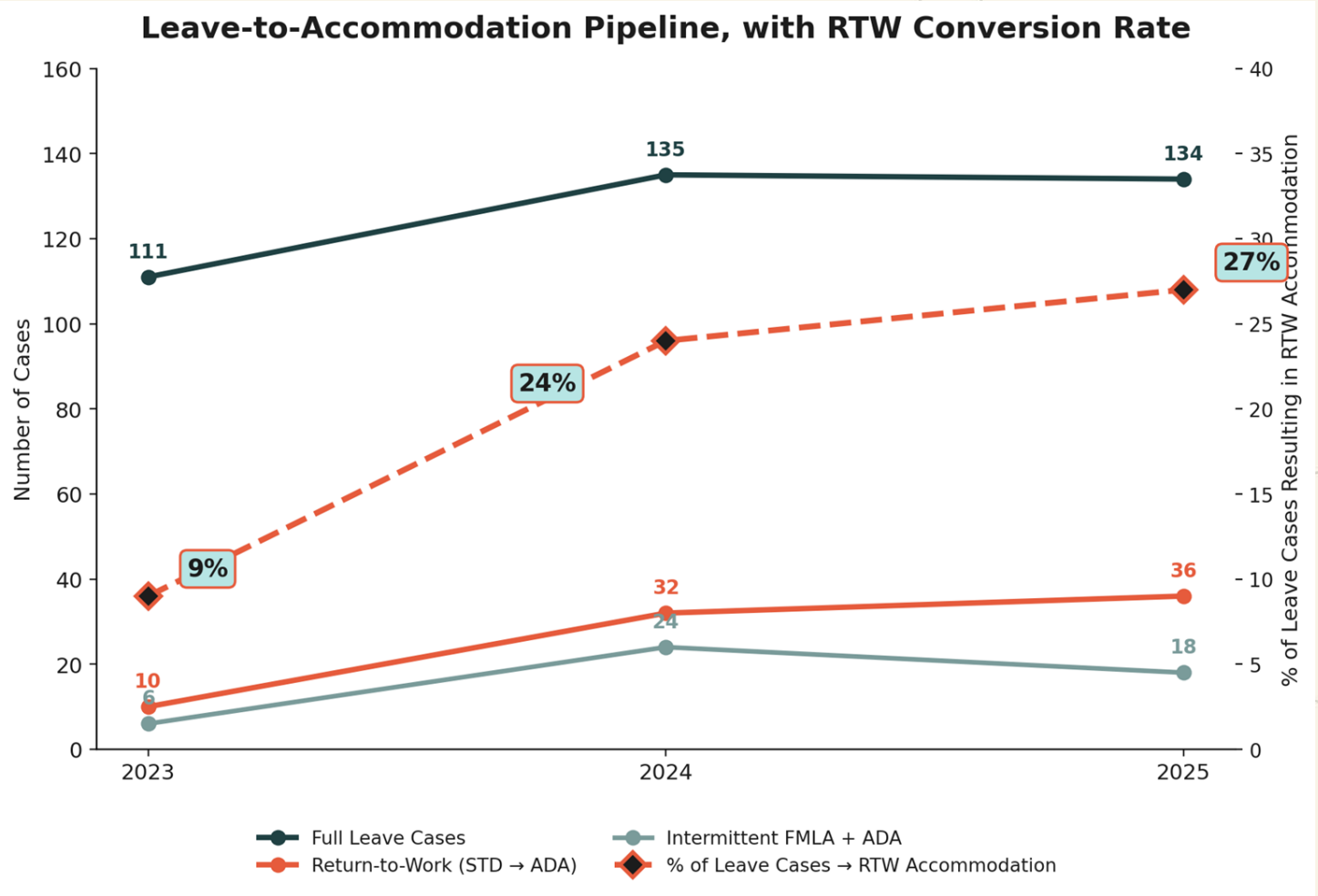
What The Data Can Tell Us

- Leave-to-Accommodation Pipeline
- Growth in Mental Health Cases
- Return-to-Work Challenges
- Operational Strain & Program Complexity
- Pregnancy & PWFA Growth
- Employee Relations Overlap



Trend #1: Leave-to-Accommodation Pipeline

What does this indicate to you?

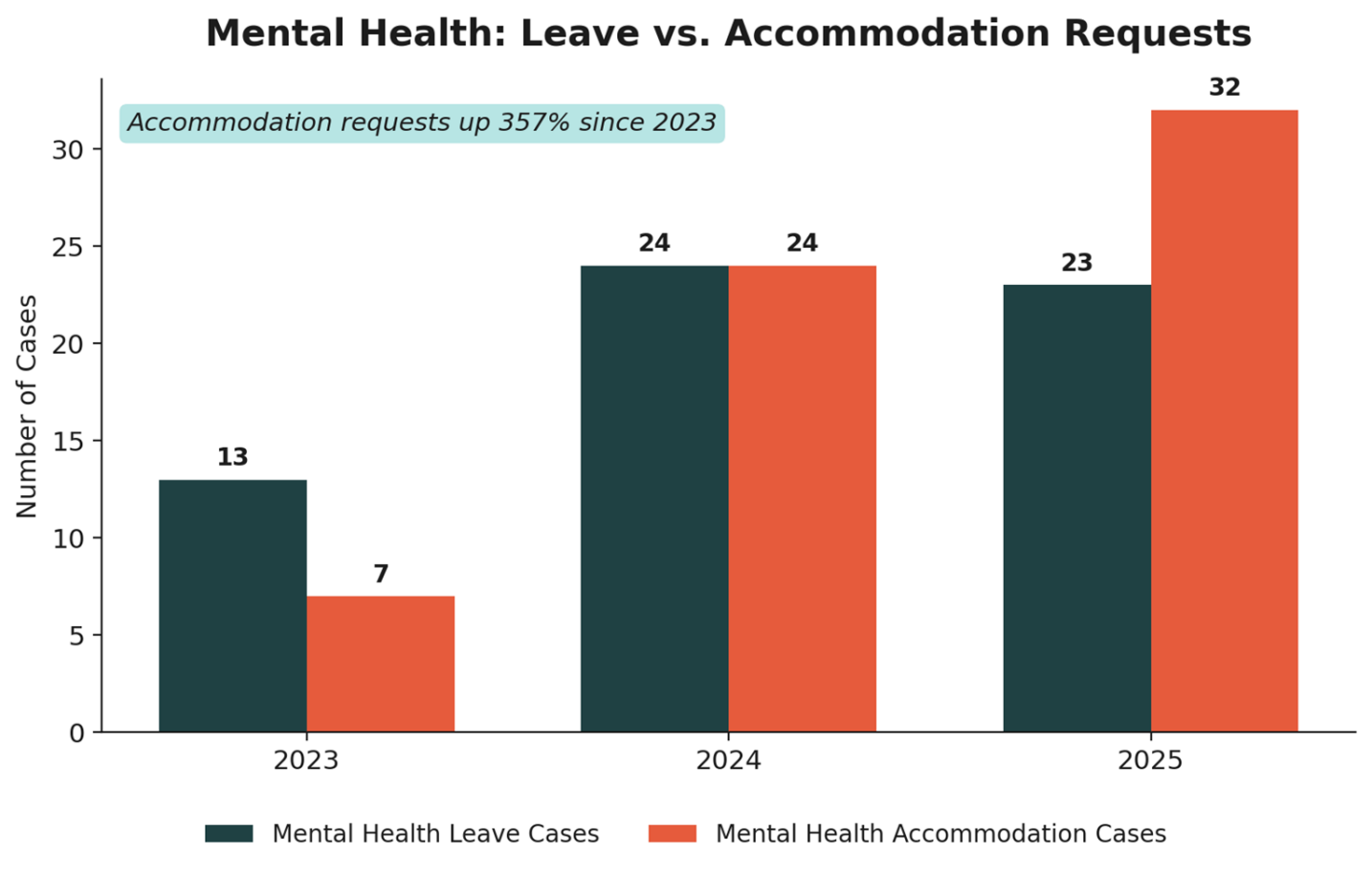


Trend #1: Leave-to-Accommodation Pipeline Insights

- Employees increasingly need support beyond leave
- Return-to-work is becoming more accommodation focused
- Leave programs and accommodations can no longer be viewed independently of one another
- The organization is no longer simply *managing absences*; it is **increasingly *managing employee transitions* back into the workplace**



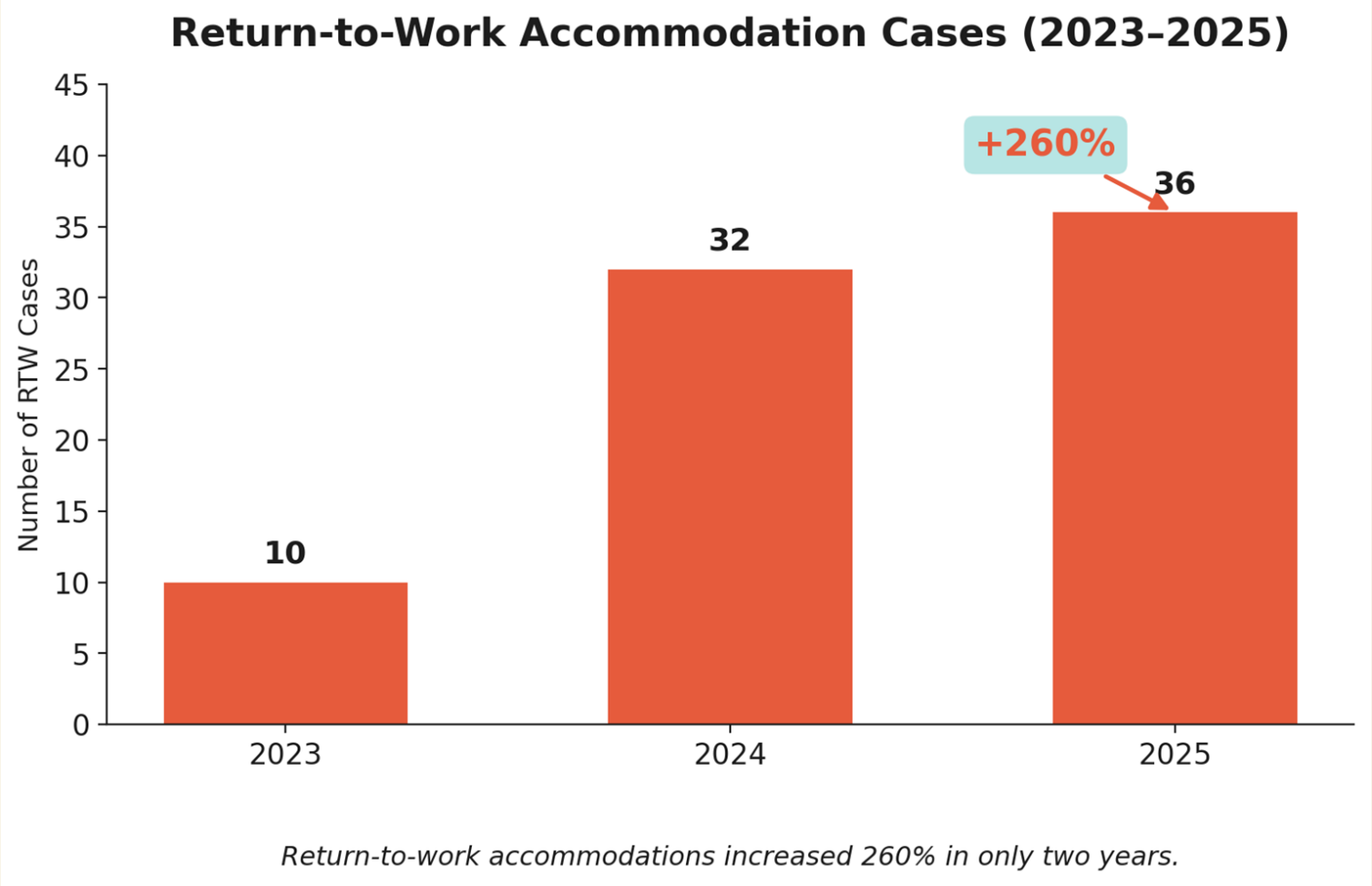
Trend #2: Shifts in Mental Health Cases



Trend #2: Shifts in Mental Health Cases Insights

- **Mental health needs are shifting from leave-based support to workplace-based support.**
- Mental health leave cases increased significantly from 2023-2024
- Mental health accommodation requests increased from 7 to 32 in two years (**a 357% increase**)
- Employees are increasingly seeking workplace modifications rather than (or in addition to) time away from work
- Workplace support may be the new solution

Trend #3: Return-to-Work Challenges



Return-to-work accommodations increased 260% in only two years.

Trend #3: Return-to-Work Insights

More employees are returning with restrictions which leads to:

- Increase in interactive process requirements
- Greater need for supervisor engagement (and training)
- More coordination between Benefits Team and ADA Team



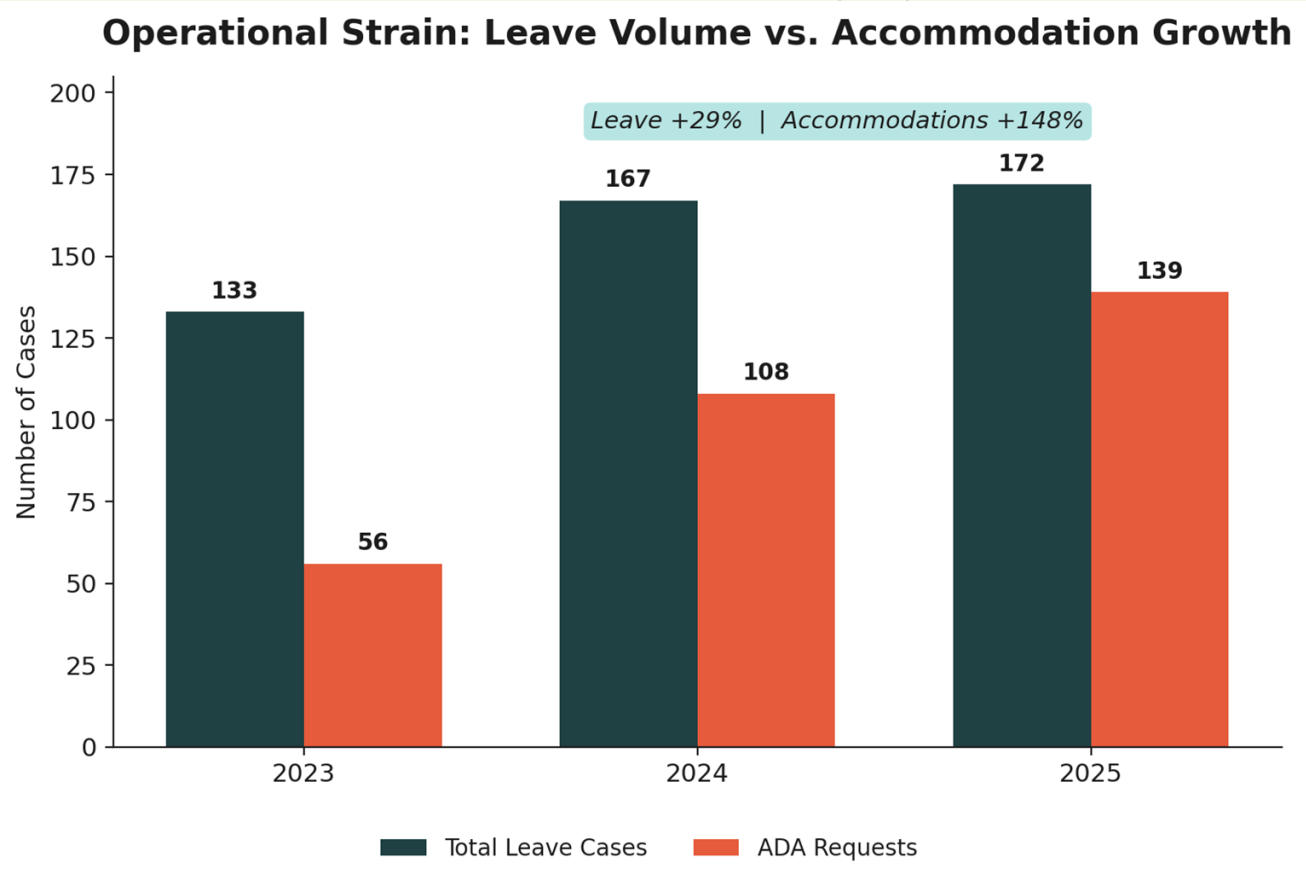
Trend #3: Return-to-Work Discussion

Discussion: If return-to-work accommodations increased by 260%, would your staffing model be sufficient? Why or why not? What would need to change?

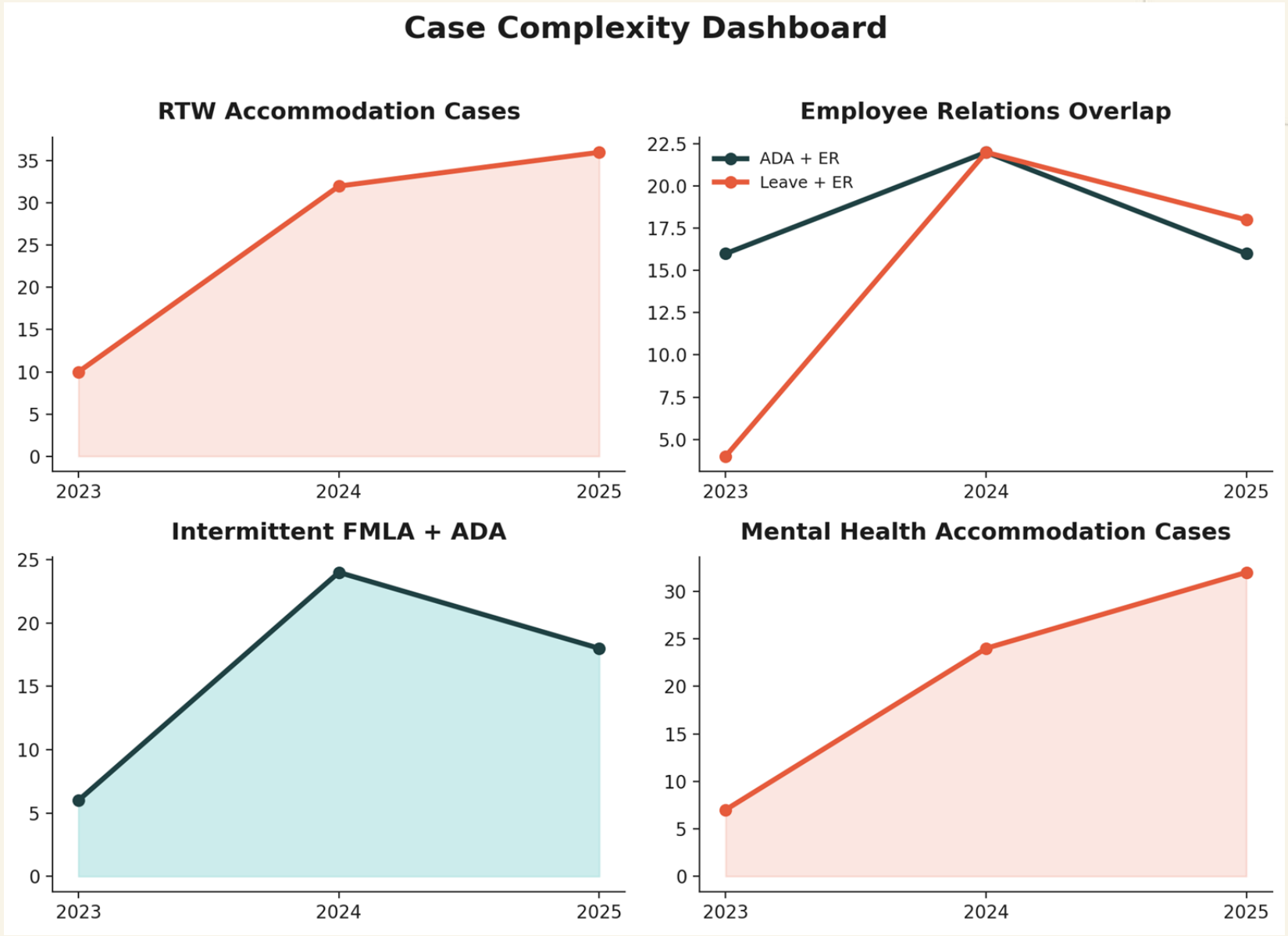


Trend #4: Operational Strain & Program Complexity

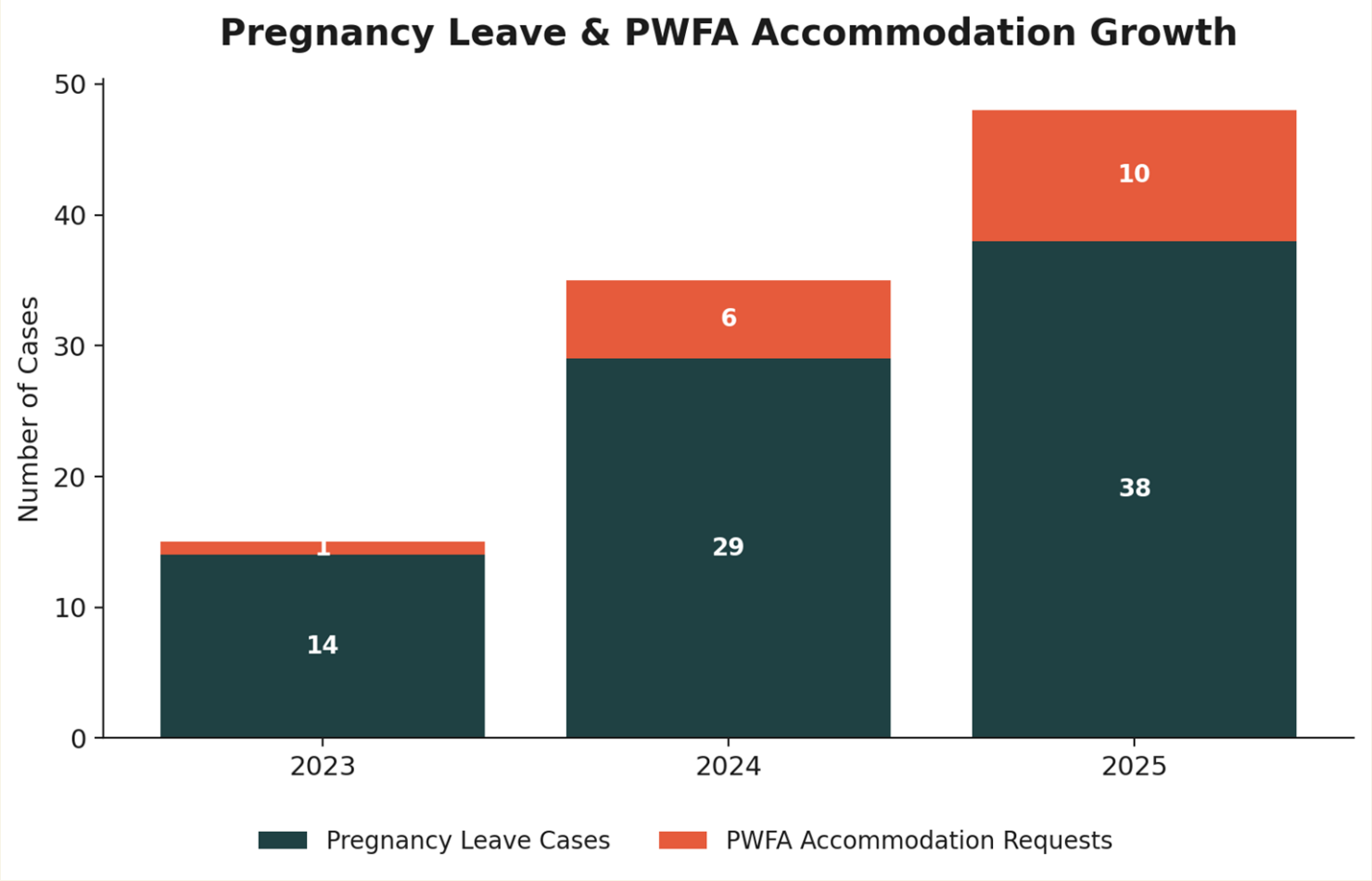
What sticks out to you here?



Case Complexity Dashboard



Trend #5: Pregnancy & PWFA Growth

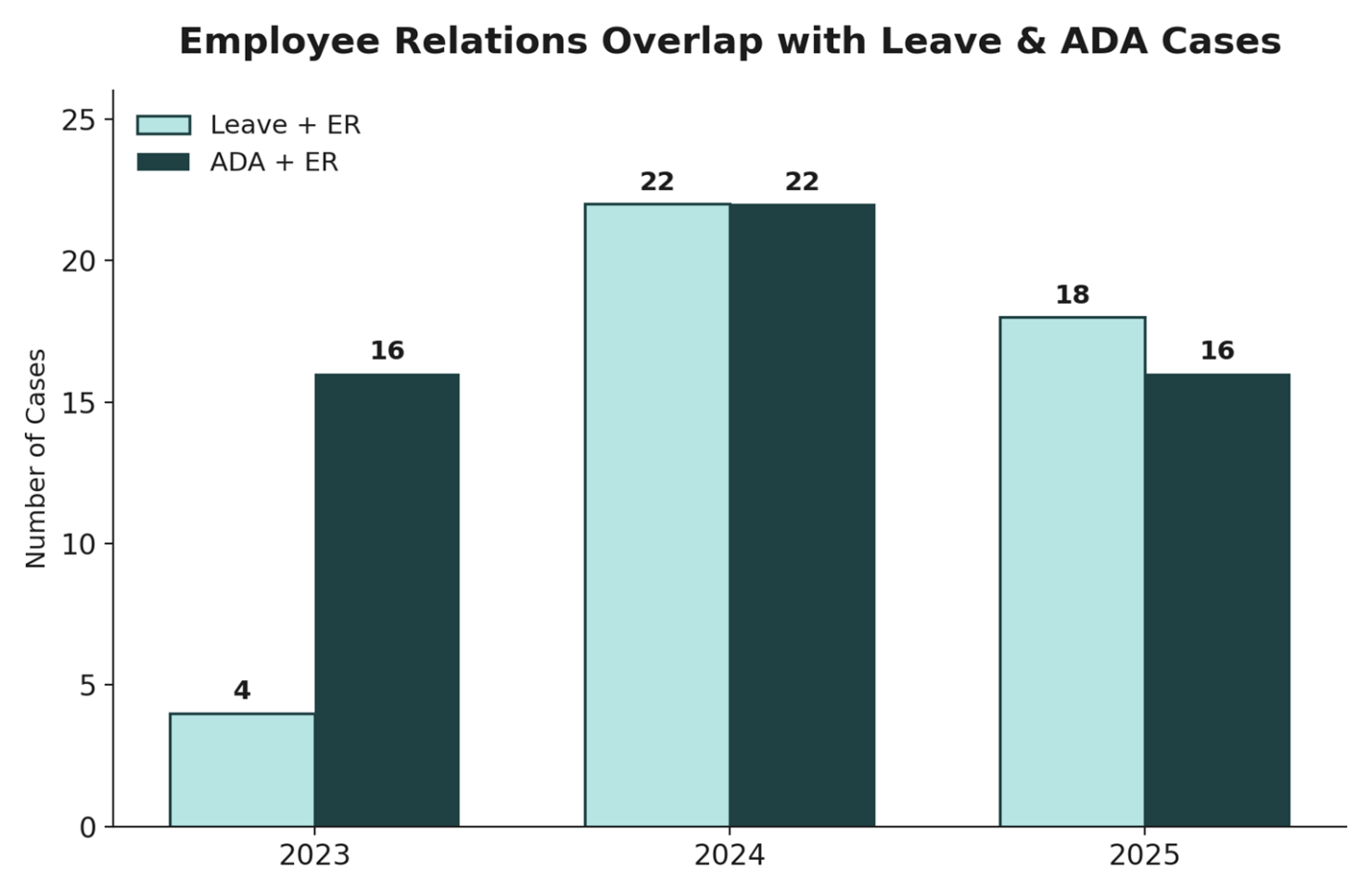


Trend #5: Pregnancy & PWFA Growth Insights

- More pregnancy related absences
- More pregnancy-related accommodation requests
- Continued implementation impact from PWFA



Trend #6: Employee Relations Overlap



Trend #6: Employee Relations Overlap Insights

Going back to complexity, these cases may involve:

- Performance Concerns
- Conduct concerns
- Workplace Conflict
- Supervisor challenges

…alongside leave or accommodation requests

Case Study Exercise

Your department leader comes to you and shares: “My team has a performance problem.”

Let’s look at how their leave and accommodation data has shifted in recent years.



Case Study Exercise: Connecting the Dots

Over the past two years, Department XYZ (45 employees) has seen:

Metric	2023	2024	2025
FMLA Leave Cases	6	9	11
Return to Work with ADA Accommodation	1	4	6
Mental Health Accommodation Requests	0	3	5
ER Cases	1	1	4

The department leader **has not been told these numbers together**, only their own ER caseload, separately, from HR.



Case Study Exercise: Discussion

- What story do you see now that you did not see before?
- What questions would you ask leadership?
- What additional data would be helpful?
- What resources might be needed?



Building Meaningful Metrics

Volume

- Number of leave/ accommodation requests
- Requests by department

Trend

- YoY growth
- Mental health cases
- RTW accommodation rates

Operational

- Average case duration
- Time to implement accommodations
- Caseload per admin

Outcome

- Successful returns
- Accommodation effectiveness reviews
- Retention rates



Using Data to Influence Decisions

- Staffing Requests
- Training Initiatives
- Wellness Investments
- Program Improvements



Reflection

- What is one metric your organization could begin tracking tomorrow that would provide a more complete picture of employee needs?



Questions?

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