

Agenda At A Glance



DMEC
2026 ANNUAL
CONFERENCE

SUNDAY, AUGUST 2, 2026

TIME	EVENT	LOCATION
1:00-5:00 pm	Hot Topics of the ADA: Navigating Psychological Disabilities, Remote Work, and the Search for “Reasonable” Accommodations	Magnolia Mezzanine 11-12
5:30-6:30 pm	FIRST-TIME ATTENDEE ORIENTATION	Magnolia Mezzanine 2-4

MONDAY, AUGUST 3, 2026

TIME	EVENT	LOCATION
9:15-9:30 am	Welcome & Opening Remarks	Tennessee Ballroom
9:30-10:30 am	Opening KEYNOTE: Nobody Climbs a Mountain Alone	Tennessee Ballroom
10:30-11:00 am	Coffee & Conversation Break - Meet and Greet with Chris Waddell	Tennessee Lobby A
GENERAL SESSIONS		
11:00 am-12:00 pm	Work Is Recovery: A Fireside Chat with Assistant Secretary Julie Hocker	Tennessee Ballroom
12:00-1:30 pm	LUNCH	Tennessee Lobby A
CONCURRENT SESSIONS		
1:30-2:30 pm	Beyond the Summit: Supporting the Climb, Not Just the Request	Tennessee Ballroom
	Beyond Suspicion: Practical Strategies for Managing Leave Concerns	Magnolia Mezzanine 11-12
	Mattering: A Fail-Safe Strategy for Bolstering Employee Engagement & Injury Recovery	Magnolia Mezzanine 9-10
	Beyond Compliance: Strengthening Job Protection in Employer Leave Programs	Magnolia Mezzanine 2-4
	Building competitive leave and disability benefits across state lines	Magnolia Ballroom
2:30-3:00 pm	COFFEE & CONVERSATION BREAK	Tennessee Lobby A
3:00-4:00 pm	PFML in Motion: Key Trends Shaping Tomorrow’s Leave Landscape	Tennessee Ballroom
4:00-5:00 pm	Beyond the Claim: A Practical Playbook for Supporting Employees Back to Health—and Back to Work	Tennessee Ballroom
5:00-7:00 pm	OPENING WELCOME RECEPTION	Water’s Edge

TUESDAY, AUGUST 4, 2026

TIME	EVENT	LOCATION
7:00-8:30 am	BREAKFAST WITH EXHIBITORS	Ryman Hall B 1-2
8:30-8:45 am	Welcome, Announcements and Kaleta Carruthers Award	Tennessee Ballroom
GENERAL SESSIONS		
8:45-9:45 am	Intelligent by Design, Human at Heart: Responsibly Preparing for Transformation	Tennessee Ballroom
9:45-10:30 am	COFFEE & CONVERSATION BREAK WITH EXHIBITORS	Ryman Hall B 1-2
WORKSHOPS		
10:30 am-12:00 pm	From Solo to Symphony: Benchmarking Basics	Magnolia Ballroom
	Burnout Is Not a Badge of Honor: Workforce Strategies to Strengthen Accommodation and Leave Outcomes	Magnolia Mezzanine 11-12
	Come on Down! Rewriting FMLA Strategies for a New Era	Magnolia Mezzanine 9-10
	Beyond Policy: A Comprehensive Time Away From Work Gap Analysis Case Study	Magnolia Mezzanine 2-4
	Whole Person Disability Management: The Missing Link in Controlling Healthcare Costs	Tennessee Ballroom
12:00-1:30 pm	LUNCH WITH EXHIBITORS	Ryman Hall B 1-2
CONCURRENT SESSIONS		
1:30-2:30 pm	Harmonizing Your Global Time Away and Accommodations Programs: A Complete E2E Policy & Process Journey	Magnolia Ballroom
	They’re Not “Difficult,” They’re Different: How Gen Z Is Changing Leave & Accommodations Management	Magnolia Mezzanine 11-12
	Doing More with Less: Sustainable Leave Management When Caseloads Won’t Stop Growing	Tennessee Ballroom
	How are your company policies holding up with all these PFML programs?	Magnolia Mezzanine 2-4
	Untangling the PFL and PFML Patchwork	Magnolia Mezzanine 9-10
2:30-3:15 pm	DESSERT BREAK WITH EXHIBITORS	Ryman Hall B 1-2
BONUS EDUCATION		
3:15-4:15 pm	The Future of the Employee Leave Experience: Research Insights from a DMEC-Penguin Benefits Think Tank	Magnolia Ballroom
3:15-4:15 pm	Generational Expectations of Leave of Absence Programs: From Boomers to Gen Alpha	Magnolia Mezzanine 9-10
3:15-4:15 pm	Unlocking the Power of DMEC Education: Building Confidence, Capability, and Consistency	Magnolia Mezzanine 11-12
4:15-4:30 pm	BREAK	

4:30-5:30 pm	Unlocking the Full Value of Benefits: Connecting Programs to Maximize Support	Tennessee Ballroom
5:30-6:30 pm	HAPPY HOUR WITH EXHIBITORS	Ryman Hall B 1-2

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 5, 2026

TIME	EVENT	LOCATION
7:00-8:00 am	BREAKFAST WITH EXHIBITORS	Ryman Hall B 1-2
8:00-8:15 am	Welcome & Announcements	
GENERAL SESSIONS		
8:15-9:15 am	Fireside chat with Policymakers	Tennessee Ballroom
9:15-10:15 am	From Policy to Practice: How Employers Are Turning Workplace Mental Health Strategies into Real Solutions	Tennessee Ballroom
10:15-11:00 am	COFFEE & CONVERSATION BREAK WITH EXHIBITORS	Ryman Hall B 1-2
CONCURRENT SESSIONS		
11:00 am-12:00 pm	Why employers also benefit from Statutory Paid Leave programs	Magnolia Ballroom
	Predictive Absence: Using AI & Behavioral Data to Prevent Long-Term Disability Before It Starts	Tennessee Ballroom
	Advancing the Conversation Around Neurodivergent Education-Employment Transitions	Magnolia Mezzanine 2-4
	Centering Employees with Disabilities: The Disability Experience Survey	Magnolia Mezzanine 9-10
	Beyond the Numbers: Leave and Accommodation Data Insights	Magnolia Mezzanine 11-12
12:00-1:30 pm	LUNCH WITH EXHIBITORS	Ryman Hall B 1-2
CONCURRENT SESSIONS		
1:30-2:30 pm	The Aftershock: Trauma's Impact on Mental Health Leave	Magnolia Mezzanine 2-4
	Putting the "Paid" in Paid Leave – A Rate of Pay Examination	Magnolia Ballroom
	Addressing the silent cost of menopause: A growing imperative for absence programs	Magnolia Mezzanine 9-10
	From One-Hit Wonders to Greatest Hits: Building Leave Programs That Last	Tennessee Ballroom
	Reducing the Frequency, Duration, and Impact of Stress-Related Leave Through Resilience Upskilling	Magnolia Mezzanine 11-12
2:30-3:15 pm	DESSERT BREAK WITH EXHIBITORS – PRIZE GIVEAWAY ANNOUNCEMENTS	Ryman Hall B 1-2
BONUS EDUCATION		
3:15-4:15 pm	Policymaker Roundtable Session: Bridging Employer Experience and Policymaking on Workplace Leave	Magnolia Ballroom
3:15-4:15 pm	DMEC Member Focus Group - Invitation Only	Magnolia Mezzanine 2-4
3:15-4:15 pm	Mind-Gut Connection: Supporting Employees' Digestive and Mental Health at Work	Magnolia Mezzanine 11-12
3:15-4:15 pm	The Caregiving Crisis at Work: Supporting the Sandwich Generation in Today's Workforce	Magnolia Mezzanine 9-10
4:15-4:30 pm	BREAK	
CONCURRENT SESSIONS		
4:30-5:30 pm	Treated But Not Recovered: Why Behavior Determines Return-to-Work Outcomes in Cancer	Magnolia Mezzanine 2-4
	The 90-Day Retention Trap: Make Managers Your Leave Strategy	Magnolia Mezzanine 11-12
	Religious Accommodations: An EEOC Enforcement Priority and Employer Retooling Imperative	Magnolia Mezzanine 9-10
	Recent Jury Verdicts Involving Leave and Accommodation Issues	Magnolia Ballroom
	Employer Considerations for Modern Leave Planning Tools	Tennessee Ballroom
5:45-6:30 pm	Buses depart for closing event	Magnolia Canopy
7:00-10:00 pm	DMEC CLOSING EVENT: FRIENDS IN LOW PLACES	

THURSDAY, AUGUST 6, 2026

TIME	EVENT	
7:30-8:15 am	BREAKFAST	Tennessee Lobby A
8:15-8:30 am	Welcome & Announcements	Tennessee Ballroom
GENERAL SESSIONS		
8:30-9:30 am	The leave impact framework: Designing leave programs that deliver	Tennessee Ballroom
9:30-10:30 am	Navigating the New Frontier of Emerging Leave Trends	Tennessee Ballroom
10:45-11:45 am	Ask The Experts Panel - moderated by Bryon Bass	Tennessee Ballroom
11:45 am-12:00 pm	Closing Remarks & Grand Prize Giveaway	

FINAL DAY REMINDERS!

CHECK OUT IS AT 11:00 AM. You may check your luggage with Guest Services prior to the start of the morning sessions. You are welcome to bring your luggage with you to store in the back of the meeting room. Late check out requests may be requested at check in but will be granted on a limited basis.

DON'T FORGET! Complete your session and post-conference evaluation forms on the DMEC mobile app to earn your CEU credits.