

# Agenda At A Glance



**DMEC**  
2026 ANNUAL  
CONFERENCE

## SUNDAY, AUGUST 2, 2026

TIME	EVENT
1:00-5:00 pm	Preconference Workshop
3:30-4:30 pm	<b>FIRST-TIME ATTENDEE ORIENTATION</b>
5:00-7:00 pm	Leadership Reception - <i>By invitation Only</i>

## MONDAY, AUGUST 3, 2026

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

## TUESDAY, AUGUST 4, 2026

TIME	EVENT
7:30-8:30 am	<b>BREAKFAST WITH EXHIBITORS</b>
8:30-4:45 am	Welcome, Announcements and Kaleta Carruthers Award
<b>GENERAL SESSIONS</b>	
8:45-9:45 am	Intelligent by Design, Human at Heart: Responsibly Preparing for Transformation
9:45-10:30 am	<b>COFFEE &amp; CONVERSATION BREAK WITH EXHIBITORS</b>
<b>WORKSHOPS</b>	
10:30 am-12:00 pm	DMEC Benchmarking Workshop
	Burnout Is Not a Badge of Honor: Workforce Strategies to Strengthen Accommodation and Leave Outcomes
	Come on Down! Rewriting FMLA Strategies for a New Era
	Beyond Policy: A Comprehensive Time Away From Work Gap Analysis Case Study
	Whole Person Disability Management: The Missing Link in Controlling Healthcare Costs
12:00-1:30 pm	<b>LUNCH WITH EXHIBITORS</b>
<b>CONCURRENT SESSIONS</b>	
1:30-2:30 pm	Harmonizing Your Global Time Away and Accommodations Programs: A Complete E2E Policy & Process Journey
	They're Not "Difficult," They're Different: How Gen Z Is Changing Leave & Accommodations Management
	Doing More with Less: Sustainable Leave Management When Caseloads Won't Stop Growing
	How are your company policies holding up with all these PFML programs?
	Untangling the PFL and PFML Patchwork
2:30-3:15 pm	<b>DESSERT BREAK WITH EXHIBITORS</b>
<b>BONUS EDUCATION</b>	
3:15-4:15 pm	Penguin Think Tank Results - Panel Presentation
3:15-4:15 pm	Member Focus Group Discussion - <i>By invitation Only</i>
3:15-4:15 pm	Generational Expectations of Leave of Absence Programs: From Boomers to Gen Alpha
3:15-4:15 pm	TBD

4:15-4:30 pm	<b>BREAK</b>
4:30-5:30 pm	Unlocking the Full Value of Benefits: Connecting Programs to Maximize Support
5:30-6:30 pm	<b>HAPPY HOUR WITH EXHIBITORS</b>

## WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 5, 2026

TIME	EVENT
7:00-8:00 am	<b>BREAKFAST WITH EXHIBITORS</b>
8:00-8:15 am	Welcome & Announcements
<b>GENERAL SESSIONS</b>	
8:15-9:15 am	Fireside chat with Policymakers
9:15-10:15 am	From Policy to Practice: How Employers Are Turning Workplace Mental Health Strategies into Real Solutions
10:15-11:00 am	<b>COFFEE &amp; CONVERSATION BREAK WITH EXHIBITORS</b>
<b>CONCURRENT SESSIONS</b>	
11:00 am-12:00 pm	Why employers also benefit from Statutory Paid Leave programs
	Predictive Absence: Using AI & Behavioral Data to Prevent Long-Term Disability Before It Starts
	Advancing the Conversation Around Neurodivergent Education-Employment Transitions
	Centering Employees with Disabilities: The Disability Experience Survey
<b>QUICK-DIVE SESSIONS</b>	
11:00-11:25 am	Doing the Hard Thing: Navigating High-Risk Leave and Accommodation Conversations Without Creating Legal Exposure
11:35 am-12:00 pm	Beyond the Numbers: Leave and Accommodation Data Insights
12:00 am-1:30 pm	<b>LUNCH WITH EXHIBITORS</b>
<b>CONCURRENT SESSIONS</b>	
1:30-2:30 pm	The Aftershock: Trauma's Impact on Mental Health Leave
	Putting the "Paid" in Paid Leave – A Rate of Pay Examination
	Menopause and the Intersection with Best-in-Class Absence Programs
	From One-Hit Wonders to Greatest Hits: Building Leave Programs That Last
	Reducing the Frequency, Duration, and Impact of Stress-Related Leave Through Resilience Upskilling
2:30-3:15 pm	<b>DESSERT BREAK WITH EXHIBITORS – PRIZE GIVEAWAY ANNOUNCEMENTS</b>
<b>BONUS EDUCATION</b>	
3:15-4:15 pm	Policymaker Roundtable Session
3:15-4:15 pm	From Fragmented Leave to Connected Experience: How AI Enables the Next Generation of Absence Management
3:15-4:15 pm	Mind-Gut Connection: Supporting Employees' Digestive and Mental Health at Work
3:15-4:15 pm	The Caregiving Crisis at Work: Supporting the Sandwich Generation in Today's Workforce
4:15-4:30 pm	<b>BREAK</b>
<b>CONCURRENT SESSIONS</b>	
4:30-5:30 pm	Treated But Not Recovered: Why Behavior Determines Return-to-Work Outcomes in Cancer
	The 90-Day Retention Trap: Make Managers Your Leave Strategy
	Religious Accommodations: An EEOC Enforcement Priority and Employer Retooling Imperative
	Recent Jury Verdicts Involving Leave and Accommodation Issues
	Employer Considerations for Modern Leave Planning Tools
5:45-6:30 pm	Buses depart for closing event
5:30-6:30 pm	<b>DMEC CLOSING EVENT: FRIENDS IN LOW PLACES</b>

## THURSDAY, AUGUST 6, 2026

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