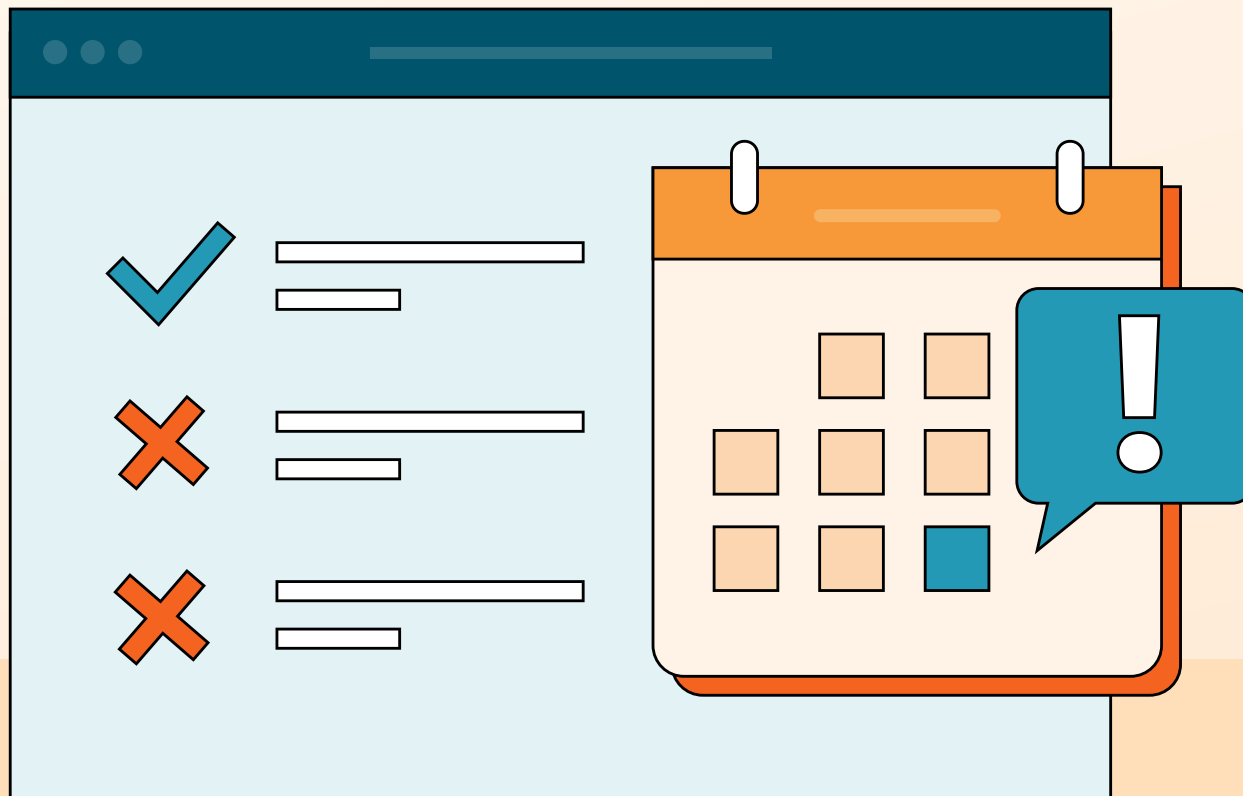


# Six Signs Your Organization is Ready to Insource Leave and Accommodations Management



# Introduction

During the past few years, managing leaves of absence and workplace accommodations has become a lot more time-consuming and complex. With the rise of remote work, today's workforces are more spread out than ever before, requiring organizations to be compliant with additional state leave laws. **Leave requests are also on the rise, with employers expecting them to rise by 41-60% in 2023 alone – with the top drivers being illness, mental wellness, and caregiving.**<sup>1</sup> To recruit and retain talent, employers are adding more types of paid leave, leaving HR managers scrambling to implement and manage these new policies.

Between long COVID, new protections for pregnant employees under the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (PWFA), and greater awareness of neurodiversity and mental health issues, requests for accommodations are also on the rise. A recent AbsenceSoft survey<sup>2</sup> found that 72% of large employers (5,000 or more employees) anticipated an increase in accommodations requests in 2023 due to PWFA alone – anywhere from 11-40%!

To give their employees some respite from these challenges, organizations often choose to outsource some or all of their leave and accommodations management processes. For many companies, outsourcing can be a great fit, leaving them to focus on other HR functions. In recent years, however, leave and accommodations management technology has come a long way. Robust platforms that centralize, automate, and streamline leave and accommodations processes now offer organizations a better way to bring—or keep—leave management in house.

In this guide, we'll look at ways to tell if your organization is ready to insource your leave and accommodations programs. You will learn more about how new leave and accommodations management technologies can transform your HR processes, and make them faster, more streamlined, and much more compliant.



<sup>1</sup> AbsenceSoft 2023 Employee Leave of Absence Forecast Survey

<sup>2</sup> AbsenceSoft 2023 Pregnant Worker's Fairness Act Employer Readiness Survey

# Are You Ready to Insource Your Leave Program?

With the right technology in place, large organizations across a wide range of sectors will find success managing leave and accommodations management in-house. Insourcing your LOA and accommodations programs can be a particularly good choice if any of the following are true about your organization.



## 1 Employee experience is a top organizational priority

As the labor market tightens, more organizations are placing a high priority on improving the employee experience. If finding and implementing ways to improve employee experience is one of your HR team's goals, insourcing leave and accommodations management can be a great fit. **After all, no one can truly care for your own employees more than your own employees.**

**When you manage the leave and accommodations process in-house with the right technology, you can control and optimize every part of an employee's experience.**

When an employee is requesting a leave of absence, it is often a stressful event — whether it is the anticipated arrival of a new child or the loss of a loved one. During these times, you don't want your leave process to add to their burden with long response times, confusion about eligibility, or having to correct errors in their employment data. Sometimes, if you are using an outsourced provider, employees can be asked to verify their eligibility to both the outsourcing partner and your company. Not only is this tedious for the employee, but if leave is needed immediately, it can result in unnecessary delays in approval.

With a leave management system like AbsenceSoft, you gain a robust set of tools to provide a seamless, simple, straightforward leave process for employees during a difficult time in their life. This new leave process will include:

## More efficient case management

When employees contact your team to request leave, a new case can be opened in seconds. Leave managers can walk employees through their eligibility and options quickly and easily, without introducing any added confusion and stress.

## Streamlined, automated communications

The ability to automate a communications cadence helps employees know exactly what information they need to provide and by when. Even better, if the original team member that opened the case isn't available, any other team member can access the system to answer questions or update the case as needed. Employees feel fully cared for, without having to wait for responses or eligibility decisions.

## Employee self-service

Leave systems like AbsenceSoft offer an online self-service portal for employees that they can login to on any device, any time that is convenient for them. The portal will calculate their eligibility in seconds and capture all the required information in four easy steps. Employees also have a central location they can visit to track their requests, see updates, and add information at any time.

The screenshot displays a user interface for managing leave cases. It is organized into several sections on the left and a column of action buttons on the right. A communication bubble is overlaid on the 'To-Do's' section.

Section	Fields/Buttons
Case Info	Case ID: [input], Type: [input], Status: [input], Description: [input], Summary: [input], Requested Start: [input], Requested End: [input], Case Manager: [input]
Employee Info	Case ID: [input], Hire Date: [input], Hours Worked: [input], Employer: [input], Office Location: [input]
Case History	[input]
Policies	Change Status [button], FMLA: [input], FMLA: [input]
Time Tracker	Policy: FMLA, Company Policy, Time Used: 4.3 weeks, 2 weeks, Time Available: 7.7 weeks, 8 weeks
Work Restrictions	FMLA: [input]
To-Do's	To-Do: Send Eligibility packe

Right-side buttons: Communications, Notes, Case Activity, Contacts, Healthcare Provider, New Case, Change Case, Add Accommodations, Add Restriction, Add To-Do.



## 2

## Your organization wants to personalize the leave and accommodations experience

Another reason we see customers choose to bring leave and accommodations management in-house is to deliver a more personalized experience. Many organizations today invest a lot of time and effort to build a unique work culture around shared values. Companies can spend a great deal of effort to ensure these organizational values and culture are infused as much as possible across every employee experience. This leads many employers to seek ways to deliver a more customized and personalized leave and accommodations experience.

If your organization is outsourcing leave, you don't have many options for customizing communications and touchpoints to ensure a consistent experience. Employees end up interacting with people who aren't part of your organization's culture, and more often than not, those shared values don't get translated into the overall experience.

**By insourcing leave and accommodations with a platform like AbsenceSoft, your organization can standardize and customize every part of an employee's experience. Every communication that is sent out, from letters to text messages, can be modified to reflect your organization's culture and values.**

Leave management software allows employees to select the communication method that works best for them and can send personalized communications out via multiple delivery methods, including text and email. Automated reminders can be created so that your employees get regular check-ins from your team, ensuring they feel fully supported throughout the leave process.

More companies today are also offering new types of paid leave as a benefit to attract and retain top talent. However, tracking eligibility and usage of these new leave offerings can be a challenge, especially if you are using an outsourced provider. Each new leave policy they manage for you could add cost and complexity to your partnership.

With a leave management system like AbsenceSoft, you can add your company-specific leave policies directly into the system with no extra costs. The platform will automatically calculate eligibility for new paid leave benefits your company offers, including parental bonding leave, sabbaticals, mental health and wellness leave, and more.

CASE: \_\_\_\_\_ REQUESTED LEAVE: \_\_\_\_\_

SEND BY:  Email  Text  Print/Mail TO: \_\_\_\_\_

CC: \_\_\_\_\_ SUBJECT: \_\_\_\_\_

{Company Name}  
{Company Address}  
{Employee Name}  
{Employee Address}

ATTACHMENTS

- Authorization to Release Medical Information
- Certification for FMLA Employee Health Condition
- Employee Rights and Responsibilities under FMLA

## 3

## You need a better way to manage the interaction between leave and accommodations

Successfully managing workplace accommodations, especially the ADA interactive process, is notoriously difficult. The laws aren't as clear cut as FMLA guidelines, and the accommodations themselves can vary widely—everything from specialized equipment to working from home. Add to this the complex interactions between leave and accommodations (many times a leave of absence can be part of a workplace accommodation), and many organizations can find themselves looking for a better way to manage both.

While it can be a relatively straightforward process to outsource leave management, outsourcing accommodations management is more challenging. The ADA interactive process often requires working with multiple stakeholders across an organization, and a thorough, in-depth knowledge of what accommodations the organization is willing and able to make.

For example, if someone has a complex disability, like complications from long COVID, or ADHD, the accommodations can vary widely and require flexibility and approval from managers, co-workers, and others. An outsourced provider may also have difficulty knowing which accommodation requests would place an “undue hardship” on your organization, because it can vary a lot between different roles, company sizes, industries, and more.

Insourcing both leave and accommodations with a single platform like AbsenceSoft offers HR teams the ability to streamline processes for both leaves of absence and the ADA interactive process. Certain life events can make employees have entitlements from both FMLA and the ADA. For example, if an employee has a serious, extended illness, they might need to take a leave of absence to recover and return to work. Then, they might need a reduced schedule as an accommodation for a period of time before they return to full-time work.

The screenshot shows a web-based form for managing accommodations. The form is titled 'Type:' and has several tabs: 'Ergonomic Assessment', 'Job Change', 'Leave', 'Other', 'Schedule Change', 'Vaccine Exemption', and 'Equipment or Software'. The 'Equipment or Software' tab is selected. Below the tabs, there are several sections for input and selection:

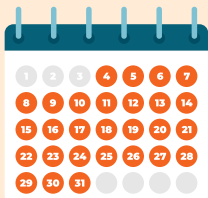
- Is it Work Related?:** Radio buttons for 'Yes' and 'No', with 'No' selected.
- Duration:** Radio buttons for 'Temporary' and 'Permanent', with 'Permanent' selected.
- Request Dates:** A date input field with '09/26/2022' entered.
- Approved:** A date input field with '09/27/2022' entered, followed by a 'to' field.
- Pending:** A date range input field with '09-26-2022 (permanent)' entered, followed by a 'to' field.
- Denied:** A date range input field with 'to' entered.
- Decision Date:** A date input field with '10/12/2022' entered.
- Resolution:** A dropdown menu with 'Implemented' selected.
- Implemented:** Radio buttons for 'Yes' and 'No', with 'Yes' selected.
- Implemented Date:** A date input field with '09/27/2022' entered.
- Cost:** A dropdown menu with '250' selected.
- Cancel Accommodation Request:** A checkbox that is currently unchecked.

At the bottom of the form, there are two buttons: 'Update Accommodation' and 'Cancel'.

**Having to track and manage leave and accommodation cases across systems and providers can cause delays in response times, confusion about statuses, missed deadlines, or worse, a leave or accommodation getting improperly denied.**

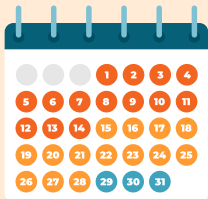
By equipping your in-house team with the right technology, you can centralize all leave and accommodations requests into one location, and get a complete case history for every employee. You can easily see where and how an employee's different entitlements interact or overlap, and track every request, interaction, and communication made throughout their employment. Automated reminders and templated communications also help to standardize and streamline each process, so that you know exactly what to do next, and when to follow up.

## HOW LEAVE AND ACCOMMODATIONS CAN INTERACT



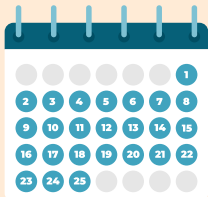
### **6 WEEKS OF LEAVE AFTER BIRTH OF A CHILD**

FMLA protected leave



### **2 WEEKS OF A FLEXIBLE WORK SCHEDULE AFTER RETURNING TO WORK**

A reasonable accommodation under the ADA and PWFA



### **4 WEEKS OF REMOTE WORK AFTER THAT**

A reasonable accommodation under the ADA and PWFA

### **AN ERGONOMIC CHAIR INDEFINITELY AT EMPLOYEE'S DESK**

A reasonable accommodation under the ADA

## 4 Your company is exploring ways to drive operational efficiency

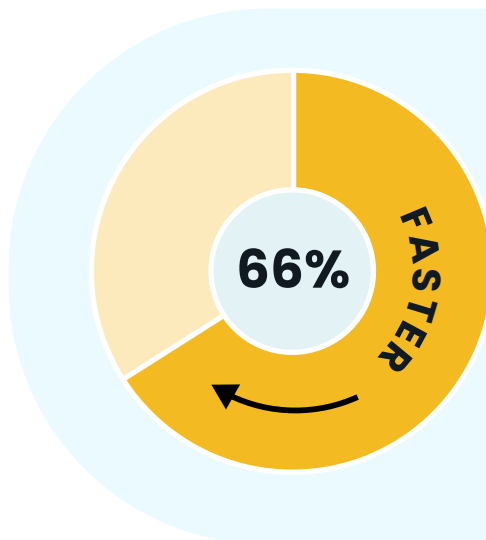
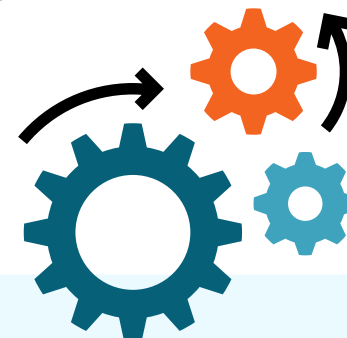
The rise of HR technology has prompted many companies to look for ways to make their HR teams more efficient and productive. If operational efficiency is an organizational goal, you should take a close look at providing your in-house HR team with tools that centralize, standardize, and automate complex, time-consuming processes.

Leave management, especially FMLA, is ideal for automation because it must follow a regulated, standard process. Systems like AbsenceSoft centralize all relevant employee data with up-to-date federal and state laws, as well as company-specific policies. This enables the platform to automatically, and accurately, calculate eligibility in just seconds. Leave team members can open a case in minutes, eliminating the need for extensive back-and-forth emails or phone calls. Even better, if your company offers a new leave policy, or changes an existing policy, it doesn't cost anything extra to update the system – unlike

some outsourcing providers that charge for policy changes.

**To save even more time, systems like AbsenceSoft offer employee self-service portals, so they can open a case without having to call or email anyone.** Employees can use any device to submit a leave or accommodations request in minutes. They can then login to check the status of their case, without having to continually contact HR teams for updates.

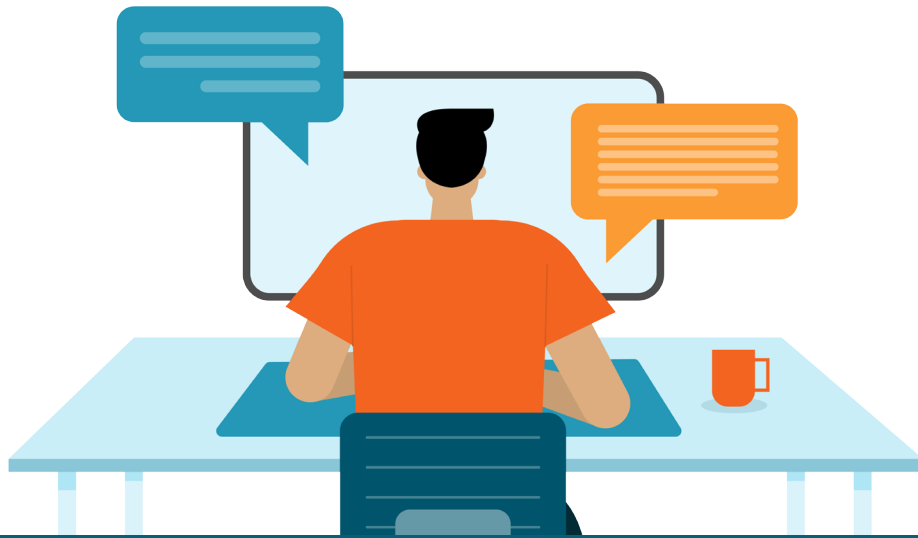
This also means that managing leave in-house might not always require an organization to hire additional staff. In fact, a recent DMEC survey<sup>3</sup> found that across a range of company sizes, the number of in-house staff dedicated to handling leave was largely the same whether leave was insourced or outsourced.



**The efficiencies delivered by leave management software can add up to a lot of time savings – a single leave case can be handled 66% faster with the right technology. When you multiply that across every leave case your leave team manages, the efficiencies grow rapidly.**

<sup>3</sup> 2021 DMEC Employer Leave Management Survey





## 5 Compliance is paramount (and getting more difficult)

The rise of remote work and distributed workforces has made staying compliant with ever-changing state leave laws more challenging than ever. But many organizations still put a high priority on compliance to ensure they aren't risking a costly lawsuit.

Insourcing leave and accommodations management with a centralized, automatically-updated system makes compliance far simpler. Standardized, automated communications make sure every employee receives the same information the same way when they request a leave or accommodation. System-generated reminders and notifications make adhering to required timelines easier, and keep managers, employees, and HR team members informed and up-to-date.

The right technology will also keep your team fully compliant with any changes to federal and state leave laws. Systems like AbsenceSoft are updated as soon as new laws take effect, greatly reducing the chances of an improper denial.

Even if you outsource the management of leave and accommodations, you can't outsource the responsibility for decisions made in every case. **Every approval and denial of a leave or accommodation is ultimately your organization's responsibility.**

## 6

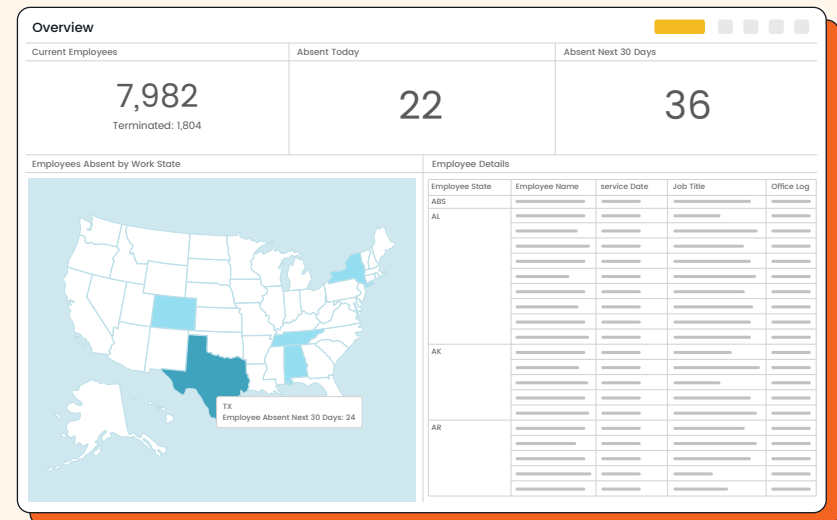
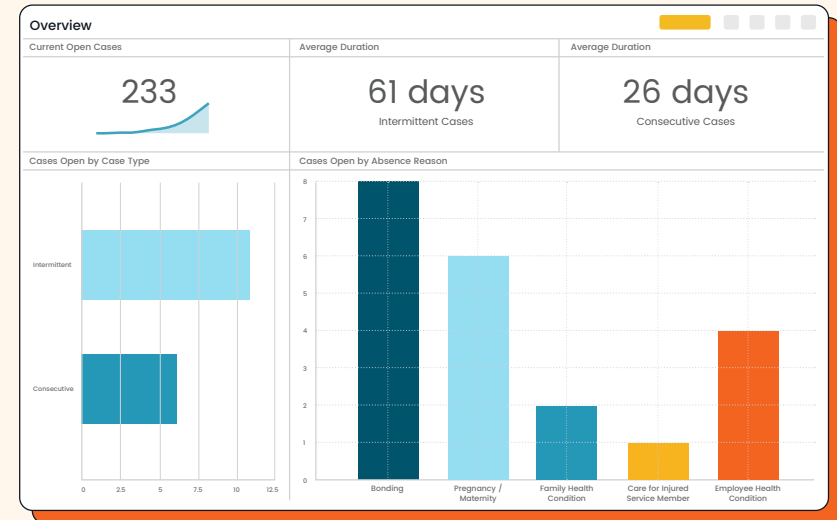
# Real-time access to your organization's data could improve your business processes

One of the biggest benefits of insourcing leave and accommodations with technology is having immediate access to all of your organization's data. The insights gained from regular, real-time reporting can improve your business processes in many ways. With an outsourced provider, sometimes there are extra costs associated with reports, and it can take time – sometimes days or weeks – for the provider to get the report to your team.

With the ability to customize and run a report in minutes, you can quickly identify urgent issues and challenges. With leave and accommodations management technology like AbsenceSoft, you can regularly run reports such as:

- Real-time leave status reports
- Accommodations status reports
- Intermittent leave usage reports
- Caseload reports

These reports will give your HR team valuable insights, including how many employees are out on leave at any given time, how many accommodations are being requested (and approved or denied), and if leave management workloads are evenly distributed among team members. Real-time reporting can help your organization run more efficiently, identify usage trends, and plan more effectively for the future.



# Choosing the Right Leave and Accommodations Management Technology

When you've made the choice to outsource your leave program, you're going to want to make sure you partner with the right technology provider. Modern systems like AbsenceSoft have a suite of robust capabilities, giving your team a centralized, automated solution that streamlines processes, saves time, and simplifies compliance.

To provide your leave team with the tools they need to deliver a top-notch leave and accommodations experience, you need to make sure your platform offers the following functionality.

## Leaves of Absence

The leave management software you select should enable your HR team to open a new leave case in minutes. A leave manager should be able to enter in all the details of a request, and have eligibility for federal, state, and company-specific policies calculated instantly. The system should also be able to track and decrement time from a time bank, which is very important for intermittent leave. The software should offer a way to create packets and communications in minutes with pre-generated, customizable templates. Finally, the platform should be able to send automated reminders throughout the leave process to ensure a seamless return to work.

## Accommodations

Leave and accommodations often overlap, which is why it's very helpful to have a single system to manage both. With the right system, HR teams should be able to quickly open a case and track the entire ADA interactive process end-to-end. It should also provide a secure, centralized location to request and store medical documentation, approvals and denials, and what accommodations have been provided and what they cost. The platform should also help your HR team monitor accommodations with automated follow-ups.



Workstation accessibility



## Employee Self-Service (ESS)

To ensure your software can deliver the best possible employee experience, you want to be sure it offers a self-service portal. These portals should be mobile-friendly, and guide employees quickly and easily through the request process. The software should show their eligibility instantly and allow them to log back in at any time to check the status of their request.

## Advanced Insights

A strong reporting function can enable your team to get valuable, real-time insights. The right leave solution should give you the ability to customize and run comprehensive reports about your leave and accommodations program. The platform should allow you to quickly export reports for sharing, schedule reports for regular distribution, and create dashboards for at-a-glance insights.



## Faxing & Barcoding

Even though it is old technology, many physicians and other medical providers still rely on fax. To make sure your platform can easily receive and store information received via fax, it should offer a fax barcoding service. Each case should have a unique barcode, so faxes can be easily scanned in and added to the case.

## Batch Fulfillment

Depending on the type of leave requested, federal regulations might require you to mail notifications to employees. It's very helpful to have a leave system with batch fulfillment functionality, so you can send all your communications to a print center or print vendor in one batch, right from the system.

## Text Messaging

To make sure you can communicate with every employee in the method that is most convenient for them, you'll want to make sure your platform supports text messaging. It's also very important to make sure it centrally stores the message and attaches it to the right case, so you can refer to it easily for compliance purposes.

# Conclusion

Let's face it: offering a compliant, personalized, and efficient leave and accommodations process is not getting any easier. Companies are adding new leave policies every day, and requests for leave and accommodations are on the rise. The new reality of remote work and distributed workforces is putting a huge burden on HR to stay compliant with a growing number of ever-changing state leave laws.

At the same time, advances in leave and accommodations management technology offer powerful new ways to meet these challenges. **Equipped with the right software, an insourced leave team can deliver a streamlined, compliant, and cost-effective leave and accommodations program.** Your HR team can use these tools to offer a personalized and customized experience that is an extension of your organization's unique culture and values.

By leveraging out-of-the-box automations, templated communications, eligibility calculations, reporting, and more, you can equip your leave team with everything they need to deliver a truly personalized and caring leave experience. With leave management technology like AbsenceSoft, you can empower your in-house leave team to provide a caring, compassionate experience to their own co-workers.

**To learn more about insourcing your leave program, and to see AbsenceSoft in action, schedule a demo today.**

[absencesoft.com](https://absencesoft.com)

