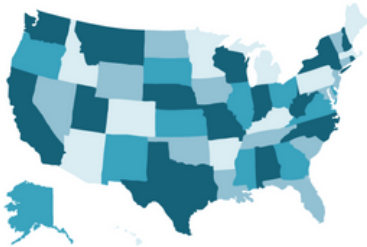


# Modernizing Leave Management: Simplifying FMLA, State, and Company Policies

FMLA Compliance



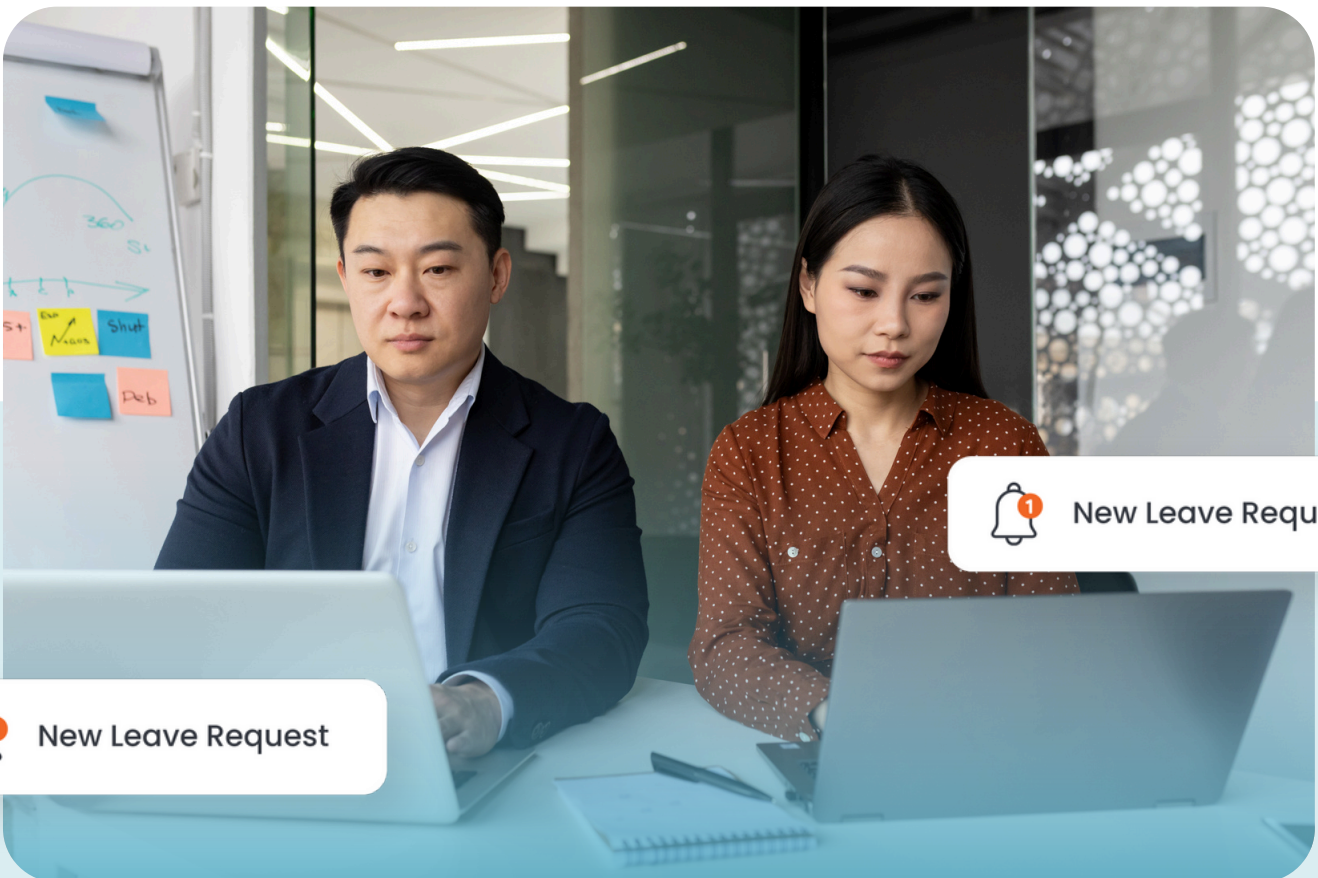
Leave requests are rising fast, and manual processes aren't keeping up.

According to AbsenceSoft's [2025 State of Leave and Accommodations Report](#), HR leaders across industries saw more employees requesting leave. And 85% of employees now feel comfortable asking for time away. That's a big change from just a decade ago. And it means leave teams are feeling the strain.

Managing steady request volumes isn't a problem, which is why leave management has been a lower priority for many HR teams and business leaders. But today, the reality of leave management has evolved.

Overburdened teams are juggling hundreds of requests, across dozens of overlapping laws and policies, while trying to stay compliant, hit deadlines, and support employees during some of the hardest moments in their lives.

That's why HR teams need a lifeline for leave management. With the right leave solution, teams can take back control of their leave program, with built-in compliance tools and automated workflows. We created this guide to show how today's strategic leave teams use modern leave management platforms reduce the admin load, improve compliance, and give HR time back to do the work that matters most.



# Leave has Become Critical to Business Outcomes and Employee Experience

When a leave of absence is handled well, employees notice. In our research, 55% of employees said they returned to work more motivated when the experience was clear, timely, and supportive. But the opposite is also true. A poor leave experience can have a lasting impact on morale, productivity, and whether someone chooses to stay.

In fact, **42%** of employees told us they returned feeling less motivated. Another **40%** either started job hunting or didn't return at all. These numbers reflect a larger trend: leave has become a defining moment in the employee experience.

It's also a moment HR can shape. Clear communication, timely paperwork, and a supportive manager often make the biggest difference. Employees who had a positive experience said they felt more valued, more loyal, and more productive. Those with negative experiences described the process as stressful, confusing, and frustrating.



**"The process was flawless and helped with the mental stress of the circumstances."**

*-Survey respondent with a **positive** leave experience*



**"Paperwork kept getting lost. I had to redo it multiple times. Awful."**

*-Survey respondent with a **negative** leave experience*

As leave requests continue to rise each year, this is a good time to step back and look at how leave is delivered. It's not just a compliance task anymore. It's a chance to support people, help managers, and protect HR teams from unnecessary stress.



# Leave Today is About Much More than the FMLA

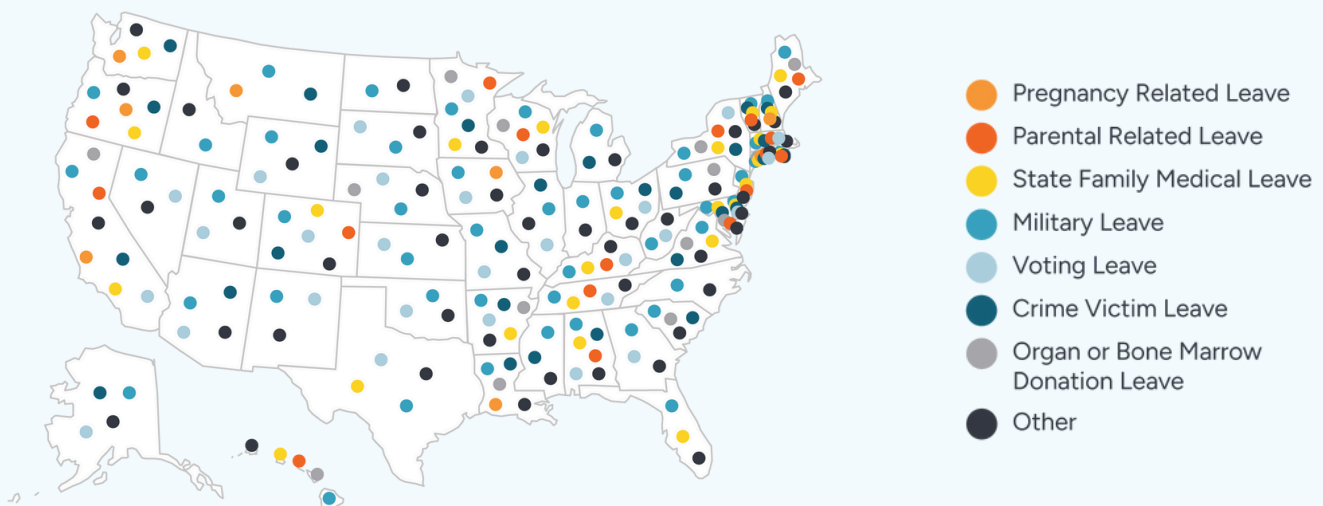
The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) is only one of more than 200 leave laws HR teams may need to understand and apply. Depending on where your employees live and work, HR teams often manage a wide patchwork of overlapping federal, state, and local requirements. Each comes with its own timelines, forms, and eligibility rules.

Common types of leave beyond the FMLA include:

- ▶ Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFML)
- ▶ Domestic Violence or Safe Leave
- ▶ Organ and Bone Marrow Donation Leave
- ▶ State Disability Pay
- ▶ Pregnancy Disability Leave
- ▶ Civic Service, Voting, and Jury Duty Leave
- ▶ Military and Family Military Leave
- ▶ School or Childcare-Related Leave
- ▶ Public Health Emergency Leave
- ▶ Company-Specific or Union-Negotiated Leave



## The Evolving Landscape of Leave Laws



On top of that, many HR teams are also managing accommodation requests under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) or the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (PWFA), which follow a different set of legal expectations, some which also entitle leave. Return-to-work processes can vary depending on the role, location, or union agreement, adding even more complexity.

## The Big Challenge: Overlap and Inconsistency

Factor	Example
Job protection	The FMLA protects the job but is unpaid. California Paid Family Leave (CA PFL) provides pay but doesn't guarantee job protection.
Paid or unpaid leave	The FMLA is unpaid unless PTO is applied. Colorado Family and Medical Leave Insurance (CO FAMLI) provides paid benefits directly.
Intermittent leave and reduced schedules	The FMLA allows intermittent time off. The ADA might require a reduced schedule as a reasonable accommodation.
Leave and accommodations	An employee recovering from surgery might qualify for leave under the FMLA. Then they may need light duty or schedule adjustments under the ADA or PWFA.

For lean HR teams, especially those without in-house legal support, it's a heavy lift. Even small oversights can lead to compliance gaps, delayed communication, or employee frustration. That's why more organizations are looking to centralize and streamline how leave and accommodations are managed, so HR can spend less time chasing paperwork and more time supporting people.

# How Technology Simplifies Every Step of the Leave Process

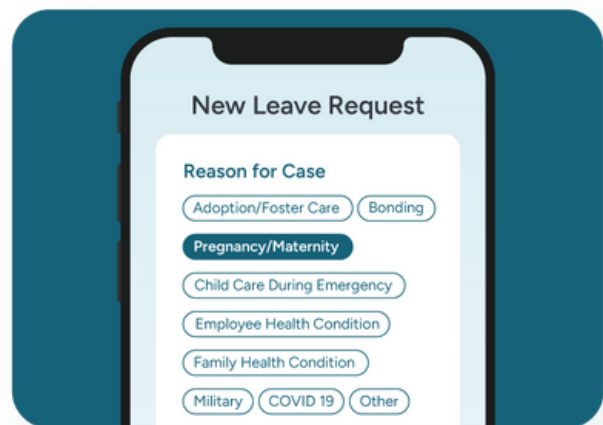
Today's leave volumes and compliance risks make manual processes too fragile. Technology lets HR automate the pieces that slow HR teams down. With the right solution, leave managers can still focus on the human side of leave, without spending hours calculating timelines or chasing missing paperwork.

## Streamlining Intake

Instead of endless back and forth, employees can submit a leave request anytime, from any device, using a self-service portal. HR teams receive all the necessary details upfront, eliminating the need to track down missing information. The request is added to the platform automatically, without manual entry.

Even when a request comes in by phone or email, leave managers can open a case in just a few clicks. With integrations to systems of record like an HRIS, key employee details such as job title, location, and leave history are already prepopulated. That saves time and cuts down on errors from the start.

Every request is captured and processed consistently, regardless of how it comes in. This makes the process easier for HR and improves the employee experience from day one.



### Cases

Employee	Reason	Updated
Marcus Garcia	Military Leave	08/15
Callie Jacobson	Pregnancy/Maternity	08/13
Alberto Fowler	Family Health Condition	08/13
Camilla Meyer	Pregnancy/Maternity	08/11
Vera Valdez	Health Condition	08/11

## Driving Efficiency

A single leave specialist using AbsenceSoft's self-service intake can manage 250–400 cases at once.

# Calculating Eligibility and Entitlements

Every leave request triggers a series of questions. Is the employee eligible under the FMLA? Does their state offer paid leave? Have they already used part of their entitlement? Is there a company policy that overlaps?

Instead of calculating all of that by hand, HR teams can rely on AbsenceSoft to do it instantly. The platform evaluates eligibility across more than 200 federal and state leave laws, along with any internal policies the organization has in place.

Powered by the AbsenceSoft Compliance Engine™ (ACE), the system considers worksite location, hours worked, calendar resets, and other critical factors. Legal experts monitor regulatory updates to ensure everything stays current and accurate.

For intermittent leave, time is tracked automatically, down to the minute if needed. And because all relevant information is displayed in a single view, HR teams don't need to jump between systems or spreadsheets to understand what applies.

## Reason for Case

☒ Pregnancy/Maternity

☐ Illness or Injury

☐ Bonding

☐ Voting Leave

☐ Military

☐ COVID 19

Expected Case Dates

June 3

to

Aug 19

Calculate Eligibility

## Policy

## Eligible

Family Medical Leave Act

Yes

Oregon Family Leave - Pregnancy/Maternity

Yes

Oregon Paid Leave

Yes

Oregon Paid Leave - Job Protection

Yes

Oregon Family Leave

Yes

ABC Company Parental Leave

Yes

## Why HR Needs a Compliance Engine

Leave laws change often, and most HR teams don't have time to track every update. A compliance engine takes that burden off your plate. It keeps federal, state, and local laws current, automatically applies eligibility and entitlement rules, and ensures your company policies are applied consistently.

AbsenceSoft's Compliance Engine™ is maintained by in-house legal and compliance experts. It helps HR stay accurate, timely, and confident, without spending hours reviewing legislation or second-guessing manual calculations.

## Handling Paperwork and Communications

Leave paperwork is both time-sensitive and time-consuming. Missing a deadline for an eligibility notice, designation notice, or return-to-work certification can create unnecessary compliance risk. A platform like AbsenceSoft helps HR stay ahead by automating the entire process:

- ▶ The correct, up-to-date forms are automatically included with each communication, based on the employee's eligibility
- ▶ Eligibility and designation notices are sent on schedule by email or text
- ▶ Medical forms received by fax or text are automatically attached to the employee's case
- ▶ Automated reminders keep employees and HR teams on track throughout the process

Because everything is stored in one secure system, HR can quickly respond to questions, prepare for audits, or handle legal reviews without having to dig through folders, inboxes, or spreadsheets.

### Fewer Missed Deadlines

After implementing AbsenceSoft, a national healthcare provider cut manual leave processing time by 75% and now sends required notices automatically, with no calendar reminders needed.

Send by: ☒ Email ☐ Text ☐ Print/Mail

To: Tara Matthews

Subject: Tara Matthews Return to Work

Hi Tara,  
Congratulations on the latest addition to your family!  
I'm reaching out to verify your upcoming return to work on Monday, April 7. Please review the following:

...

## Case Management and Insights

When leave is tracked across spreadsheets, folders, and inboxes, it's easy for something to slip through the cracks. A centralized platform gives HR full visibility into every case, every task, and every document from start to finish. With AbsenceSoft, HR teams can manage their caseloads with confidence:

- ▶ Automated to-do lists help prioritize what's most urgent and prevent missed steps
- ▶ Dashboards make it easy to reassign tasks or step in when another team member is out
- ▶ Medical certifications, return-to-work dates, and communications are all documented in one place
- ▶ Real-time reporting and dashboards helps HR teams track leave usage trends and manage workloads more efficiently
- ▶ With a clear view into what's happening across the program, HR can spend less time chasing details and more time making informed decisions.

**My Team**

Kristen Annese	2 Open Cases	+ New Request
Nick Austin	1 Open Case	+ New Request
Li Xiong	1 Open Case	+ New Request
Jess Thompson	2 Open Cases	+ New Request
Camila Wallace	1 Open Case	+ New Request

**ToDo Items**

Employee	ToDo	Due ↑	Status
Ben Hoffman	HR Communication	11/02	Pending
Julie Valdez	Mgr Communication	11/03	Pending
Tiffany Baker	Send Eligibility Notice	11/03	Completed
Leslie Jones	Enter Work Restrictions	11/03	Completed
Jose Martin	Return to Work	11/03	Completed

### No More Manual Checklists

At Purdue University, AbsenceSoft cut monthly reporting time from 6 hours to 15 minutes and saved 35% of checklist time per case.

**PURDUE**  
UNIVERSITY

## Supporting a Smooth Return to Work

The return-to-work process often gets overlooked. For regulated roles, it may involve medical clearance or updated documentation. For others, it's about communication and coordination.

With AbsenceSoft:

- ▶ Return dates are tracked and updated automatically
- ▶ Reminders go out to managers, IT, and anyone else who needs to prepare
- ▶ Medical release forms are sent and received digitally, and stored securely

When return-to-work is handled well, teams are ready and employees feel supported.

To: IT Team

Subject: Grace Nielson's Return to Work

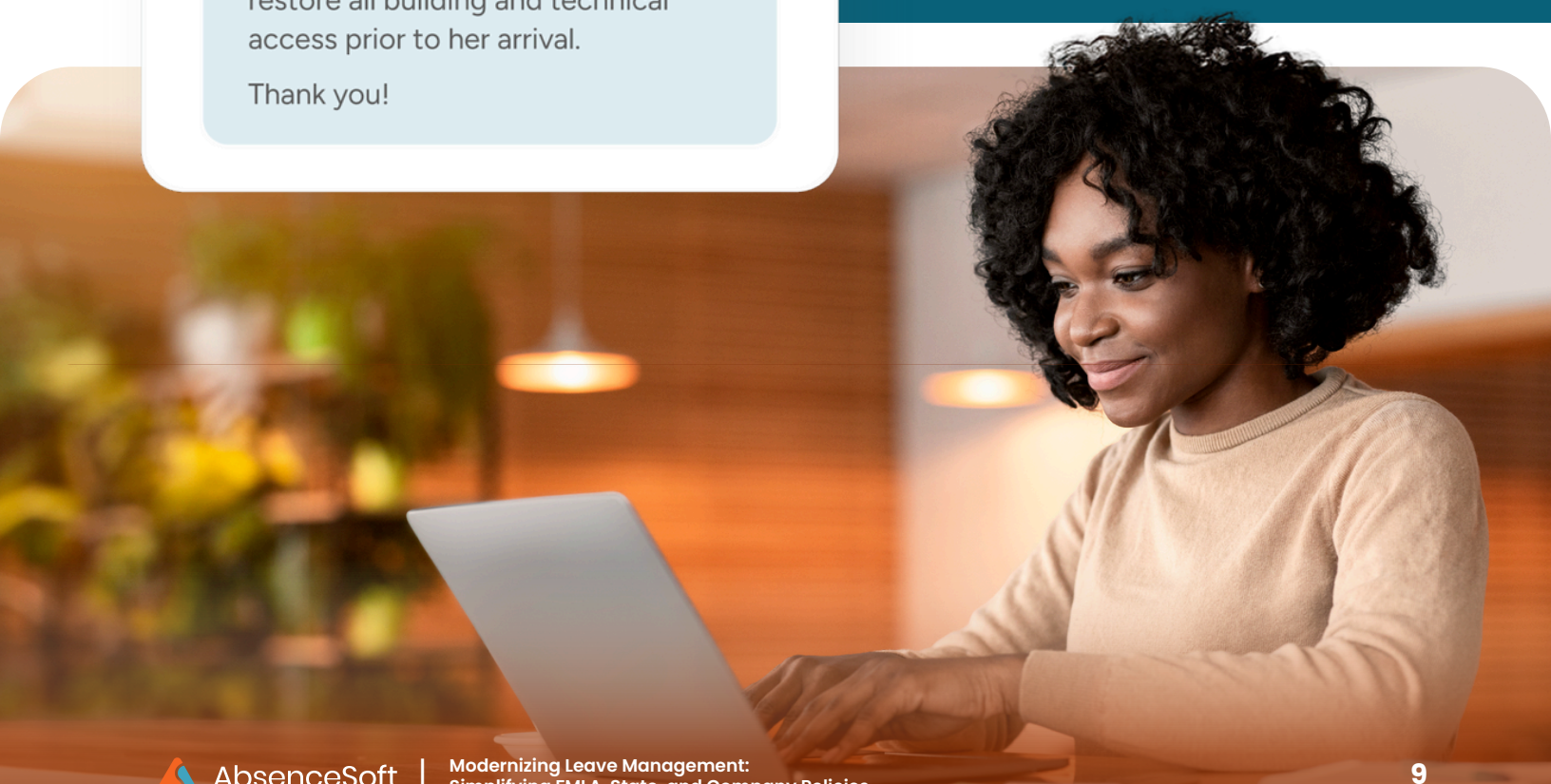
Good Morning,

Grace Nielson will be returning to work on Monday, January 13. Please restore all building and technical access prior to her arrival.

Thank you!

### Supporting Return to Work

AbsenceSoft customers have cut average leave duration from 24 to 18 business days by improving the timeliness and clarity of return-to-work communications.



# Managing Leave and Accommodations Together

Leave doesn't always end when the calendar says it should. An employee may need additional time off, a modified schedule, or an accommodation to transition back to work. Others may request accommodations without taking formal leave at all. Managing the FMLA, ADA, PWFA, and internal policies in separate systems creates gaps, delays, and compliance risk.

AbsenceSoft brings everything together. It manages leave and accommodations, federal and state laws, and company-specific policies in one integrated platform. With a complete view of each case, HR teams can make more informed decisions and respond faster when employees need continued support.

At Carvana, Leave and Accommodations Specialist Celeste Moreno used to manage accommodations in-house, while FMLA was handled by a third-party administrator. The split created blind spots. Without access to documentation, it was difficult to evaluate requests or explain decisions to leadership.

Now that everything is managed in AbsenceSoft, Moreno has a complete view of every case, both current and historical.



"We're able to see active cases and go back to historical ones. This helps us show our leaders why we're moving forward with a request, or why something should be handled differently."

**Celeste Moreno**

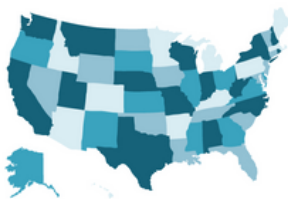
**Leave and Accommodations Specialist**



CARVANA

With leave and accommodations in one system, her team can move faster, stay consistent, and support employees with the confidence that nothing has been missed.

FMLA Compliance



Open Accommodation Cases by Type



Case Activity

9/06	Text Message
7/23	HR Communication
7/19	Mgr. Communication
7/18	HR Communication

# Are You Ready for a Change in Your Leave Process?

Here are five signs your leave process may need an upgrade:

- ▶ Eligibility rules are tracked in a spreadsheet
- ▶ Hours are recalculated and calendars reset by hand
- ▶ Managers are notified about leave by email, if at all
- ▶ Return-to-work dates are easy to miss or miscommunicate
- ▶ ADA requests are handled separately, with no visibility into leave history

AbsenceSoft helps HR teams transform their leave process end to end. With centralized case management, automation, and built-in compliance rules, it becomes easier to reduce errors, save time, and deliver a more consistent employee experience.

Here's what other HR teams have accomplished with AbsenceSoft:

- ✔ **100% visibility across 20 states** at Rite-Hite, where every leave case is documented, tracked, and accessible in one centralized system
- ✔ **13 work weeks saved annually** at Leander ISD, by automating eligibility calculations and customizing communication templates across 44 campuses
- ✔ **1–2 hours saved per intake** at Purdue University, where preloaded data and automated packets replaced manual case prep

These time savings give HR the breathing room to focus on what really matters: training managers, supporting employees, and improving outcomes across every leave and accommodations case.

## See AbsenceSoft in Action

If your leave program relies on spreadsheets, PDFs, or good intentions, you're not alone. But there's a better way. [Schedule a demo](#) with one of our CLMS-certified specialists to see how AbsenceSoft can simplify compliance, reduce admin work, and support your people.