



ABSENCE ADVISORY

REGULATORY UPDATES FROM
AFLAC'S GROUP LIFE, ABSENCE AND
DISABILITY SOLUTIONS DIVISION



AUGUST 2026

We are pleased to share the August 2026 Absence Advisory, along with information related to state and other paid leave legislation.

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ARIZONA

On June 4, Arizona's governor enacted House Bill 2663 that amends sections 26-168 and 38-610 of the Arizona Revised Statutes relating to military affairs. The current state law requires that employers that have employees who are members of the National Guard of Arizona or any other state or the United States Armed Forces Reserve take leaves of absence from employment for active military duty to attend camps, maneuvers, formations or armory drills. The amendment expands the reasons an employee may take leave for military service, replacing "to attend camps, maneuvers, formations or armory drills" with a broader term of "training." It also replaces references to protections that apply when an employee is "engaged in field training as provided by this chapter" to a general term of "under competent military orders." The amendments become effective Sept. 25.

Employers should continue to review and update their internal policies and provide timely and appropriate updates and training to management as they apply to their company. To review the full document and changes, please visit [HB2663](#) and [Chapter 0104 - 572R - H Ver of HB2663](#).

COLORADO

House Bill 26-1417

Colorado House Bill 26-1417 made amendments to Disability-Related Accommodations Requirements of: A Testing Entity. This act takes effect on Aug. 12, and the amendments include:

Revised Statute 24-34-806, Testing Accommodations for Coloradans with Disabilities – Right of Action – Legislative Declaration – definitions:

- 2(c) Amended: "Testing entity" means any person, business or state or local government agency that offers examinations or courses related to applications, licensing, certifications or credentialing for secondary or postsecondary education or for personal trade purposes.
- 3(a) Amended: "Testing entity" must offer examinations or courses in a place and manner accessible to individuals with disabilities or must offer alternative accessible arrangements for such individuals.

To review the full document and changes, please visit [Colorado House Bill 26-1417](#).

House Bill 26-1045

Colorado House Bill 26-1045 made amendments to Concerning Housing Protections for Individuals with Disabilities. This act takes effect on Aug. 12, and these amendments include:

1. Revised Statute 24-34-301 definitions
 - (2.5) Add: "Assistance animal" means an animal that does work, performs tasks, assists or provides therapeutic emotional support to an individual with a disability. "Assistance animal" includes "emotional support animal" and a "service animal."
 - (8.5) Add: "Emotional support animal" means an animal that provides solely emotional support to an individual to alleviate a symptom or an effect of a disability.
2. Revised Statute 24-34-501 definitions
 - (3.5) Add: "Reasonable accommodation" means an exception or adjustment to a rule, policy, practice or a service that may be necessary for an individual with a disability to have equal opportunity to use and enjoy housing, including public and common-use spaces.

To review the full document and changes, visit [Colorado House Bill 26-1045](#).

House Bill 26-1043

Colorado House Bill 26-1043 made amendments to Concerning Measure to Address Discriminatory Conduct Engaged in by Transporting Network Company Drivers in Providing Services to Riders. The intended effective date is Jan. 1, 2027, and the amendments include:

- Additional requirements for providing and mandating education in relationship to service animals for transportation networks that provide service for school districts or schools
- Additional requirement to post the policy of the transportation network company's website
- Amended penalty amounts in remediating violations
- Additional requirements on reporting violations when a driver refuses transport of a consumer traveling with a service animal

To review the full document and changes, please visit [Colorado House Bill 26-1043](#).

Employers should continue to review and update their internal policies and provide timely and appropriate updates and training to management as it applies to their company.

GEORGIA

In May, Georgia passed House Bill 668, which amended multiple sections of the Georgia Code to update terminology and definitions, expand protections for service dogs and provide penalties for interference, harm or misrepresentation. The act is now referred to as the Mara Jade Act.

Changes under the Mara Jade Act that went into effect July 1 include:

- Terminology amended
 - The reference of "service dog" has replaced the terms "assistance dog" and "guide dog."
 - The reference to "totally or partially blind person, physically disabled person or deaf" has been replaced with "physically or mentally impaired person."
- Changes in protection
 - Prior to July 1, only "totally or partially blind person, physically disabled person or deaf," "assistance dog" and "guide dog" were protected parties.
 - As of July 1, "service dog trainers" and "service dogs in training" are now included in the covered protection.
- Criminal penalties for interference or harm may apply
 - For a person who interferes with, or causes death or physical harm to a service dog
 - For a person who allows their dog to harass a service dog
 - Penalties if convicted included a misdemeanor judgment, fines and possible imprisonment
- Penalties for misrepresentation may apply
 - Any individual who deliberately misrepresents himself or herself as qualified to use a service dog or train or raise service dogs, if convicted, included a misdemeanor judgment, fines and possible confinement.

Employers should continue to review and update their internal policies and provide timely and appropriate updates and training to management as they apply to their company. To review the full document and changes, please visit [House Bill 668](#).

MARYLAND

The Maryland Department of Labor recently released the required Proof of Private Plan Consultation form that must accompany an employer's Declaration of Intent (DOI) for an Equivalent Private Insurance Plan (EPIP). The DOI deadline is Nov. 15. Employers that miss this filing window will no longer be eligible for an EPIP and must participate in the state plan. Employers pursuing an EPIP should act now, as the consultation form requires discussion with a carrier or licensed representative regarding private plan obligations, contribution escrow requirements, reporting responsibilities and approval timelines.

It's important for employers to understand that switching from a private plan to the state plan prior to the program's start date (Jan. 3, 2028) may trigger repayment obligations, including previously exempted state plan contributions, interest and applicable penalties. Additional DOI materials and guidance from the Department of Labor are expected to be released in September.

Aflac's Maryland FAMLl webinar from June 18 provides additional guidance on employer requirements and implementation timelines. You can access the [webinar recording](#) and the [FAQ document](#) about the program. For more information, visit the [Maryland FAMLl website](#).

MASSACHUSETTS

Annual claim reporting

Employers that meet their Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFML) law obligations through an approved M.G.L. c. 175M, sec. 11 private plan are required to maintain reports, information and records related to their approved plan and furnish required data to the Department of Family and Medical Leave (DFML) on request. The DFML requires employers with private family or medical plans in fiscal year 2026 (July 1, 2025, to June 30, 2026) to complete program reports related to their private plans annually. The reports are due Aug. 31. You can locate additional details about the reporting process [here](#). If you have a fully insured or self-funded private plan with Aflac, we will handle your reporting requirements.

New private plan portal

As previously communicated in our [June edition](#), beginning July 1, employers were able to begin applying for a private plan exemption or renewal for Massachusetts PFML in the [new PFML employer portal](#) instead of applying through MassTaxConnect.

Employers must create a new account in the PFML employer portal to submit requests, view application status, confirm current exemptions and receive communications. If employers have difficulty verifying their organization while setting up a new PFML employer account, they can [fill out this form to receive assistance](#). For additional information, please refer to the [step-by-step guide to requesting or renewing exemptions in the PFML employer portal](#) or visit the [DFML website](#).

RHODE ISLAND

The Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training has released the [new maximum weekly benefit amounts for temporary disability insurance](#). This update directly impacts benefit amounts for claims effective July 1. The new maximum weekly benefit amount will increase to \$1,150, up from \$1,103, and the new average weekly wage has increased to \$1,352.74 from \$1,297.65.

For beneficiaries with no more than five dependents, the maximum weekly benefit rate will be \$1,552. Employees with open or in-flight claims that have a benefit year beginning before July 1 will continue to receive the same benefit amount.

WASHINGTON

The Washington Employment Security Department's Leave and Care Division filed a CR-101 on Apr. 28 initiating rulemaking for the Paid Family and Medical Leave program. The rulemaking will consider policies related to employer payments, penalties, interest, benefit overpayments and other administrative topics intended to support program implementation and compliance. Draft rules and stakeholder meeting notices will be posted as they become available through the program's rulemaking process.

Employers should monitor upcoming developments, as future rule changes may affect reporting, payment and program administration requirements. For more information about the rulemaking, visit the [Washington Paid Family and Medical Leave website](#).



These are educational materials only. Employers should consult their own counsel for obligations for state-mandated leave and disability programs. Products and services are provided by Continental American Insurance Company. In New York, products and services are provided by American Family Life Assurance Company of New York. In California, coverage is offered by Continental American Life Insurance Company. Products may not be available in all states and may vary depending on state law.

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