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## **Paid Leave Oregon builds on ADA's promise, protects employment for people with disabilities**

Program supports workers managing qualifying chronic, episodic, and long-term health conditions, as well as the family members who care for them

**Salem, Ore.** — As the nation celebrates Disability Pride Month and marks the 36th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, Paid Leave Oregon is reminding workers with disabilities and their families that the program may provide paid time away from work to manage a qualifying serious health condition or care for a family member.

The Americans with Disabilities Act, signed into law July 26, 1990, established a national commitment to ending discrimination against people with disabilities. [Congress identified](#) “equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency” as goals for people with disabilities. More than three decades later, that work includes continuing to remove barriers that can make it difficult for people with disabilities to enter, remain in, and fully participate in the workforce.

“The ADA transformed our understanding of what equal access means. It affirmed that people with disabilities have the right to participate fully in our workplaces and communities,” said Andrew R. Stolfi, director of the Oregon Employment Department. “Paid Leave Oregon builds on that promise forward. When a worker needs time to manage a serious health condition, paid leave can provide financial stability and help them maintain their connection to work.”

Paid Leave Oregon does not determine eligibility based on disability status alone. Medical and family leave eligibility is based on whether a worker or their family member has a serious health condition and needs leave because of it. Many disabilities can meet that definition, depending on the condition, its effects, and the individual circumstances.

Workers should not assume that a chronic, lifelong or permanent condition makes them ineligible. To qualify, a condition does not have to be new, temporary, or expected to improve. Oregon's definition of a serious health condition includes both physical and mental conditions. It may also include chronic conditions that continue over an extended period and cause episodic periods of not being able to work, as well as permanent or long-term conditions that require continuing care, even when treatment may not be effective.

"We want Oregonians with disabilities to know that Paid Leave is designed for more than a new illness or a short recovery," said Juan Serratos, director of Paid Leave Oregon. "A condition may be chronic, episodic, permanent, physical or mental, and still meet the program's serious health condition requirements. What matters is the person's individual circumstances, how the condition affects them, and whether their need for leave meets the program's requirements."

For some workers, that may mean taking a continuous period of leave for treatment or recovery. Others may need individual days to attend recurring appointments or manage periods when a chronic condition becomes more severe. Paid Leave Oregon allows an eligible employee to take leave a week, several days, or a single day at a time, based on their qualifying need.

Paid Leave can also support eligible workers who need time away to care for a family member with a serious health condition. Qualifying care may include physical or psychological assistance, help with medical or daily needs, transportation to a health care provider, comfort and companionship, administrative tasks, or coordinating changes in care.

"Access and independence often depend on people having the support they need," Serratos said. "Family members may need time to help with treatment, transportation, daily needs or the work of coordinating care. Paid Leave helps make

it possible for people to provide that support without completely giving up their income or connection to work.”

Eligible employees can receive up to 12 weeks of paid family, medical, or safe leave in a benefit year. Paid Leave replaces a percentage of an employee’s wages, and some employees receive 100% wage replacement. Employees who have worked for the same employer for at least 90 consecutive days generally have job protection while using Paid Leave. Employers may not retaliate or discriminate against eligible employees for asking about or applying for Paid Leave benefits.

Workers applying for medical leave for their own serious health condition, or family leave to care for someone with a serious health condition, must provide supporting documentation from a health care provider. They can learn more about the serious health condition requirements and apply for benefits through [Paid Leave Oregon](#).

### **About Paid Leave Oregon**

Paid Leave Oregon provides temporary, paid time away from work so employees can have financial security when experiencing significant life events. Covered events include welcoming a new child, recovering from a serious health condition, caring for a family member with a serious health condition, or addressing issues related to sexual assault, domestic violence, stalking, or harassment. Paid leave benefits help Oregonians stay connected to their jobs and maintain financial stability during these major personal events. Learn more at [paidleave.oregon.gov](https://paidleave.oregon.gov).

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