



# RIDGELINE GEAR CO.

*Built for the Ascent & Engineered for Every Elevation*

## Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) Leave Coordinator

*Leave Administration:*

*FMLA, Colorado FAMLI, HFWA, ADA Intake, and Paid Leave*

Effective Date: April 1, 2026

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Approved by: Daniel Whitfield, HR Director

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# 1. Overview

The purpose of this document is to outline the end-to-end process followed by the Ridgeline Gear Co. **Leave Coordinator** when handling employee requests for leave of absence, accommodation intake, and paid sick time. The Leave Coordinator is a junior position reporting to the Benefits Manager. This SOP must be read in full before handling any case independently.

## In Scope

- Federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) leave requests
- Colorado Family and Medical Leave Insurance (FAMLI) coordination
- Colorado Healthy Families and Workplaces Act (HFWA) paid sick leave
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accommodation request intake only (all accommodation decisions are made by the HR Director)
- Company paid leave: PTO balance questions, bereavement leave, jury duty leave
- Intermittent leave tracking, return-to-work, and case closure
- Manager coordination and confidentiality compliance

## Out of Scope

- Benefits open enrollment, elections, and qualifying life events
- 401(k), HSA, and FSA administration
- Short-term and long-term disability claims (notify the Benefits Manager; do not advise the employee)
- Workers' compensation claims (notify the Safety Coordinator; do not advise the employee)
- Payroll processing, tax withholding, and wage replacement calculations (route to the Payroll Lead)
- Non-Colorado employees (Ridgeline policy requires all employees to be Colorado residents; any exception is handled by the Benefits Manager directly)

## Contact & Coverage

- Leaves inbox: [leaves@ridgelinegear.com](mailto:leaves@ridgelinegear.com) (alias - forwards to [m.hale@ridgelinegear.com](mailto:m.hale@ridgelinegear.com))
- Escalations inbox: [benefits@ridgelinegear.com](mailto:benefits@ridgelinegear.com)
- Support hours: Monday – Friday, 8:00 am – 5:00 pm Mountain Time
- Closed on all Ridgeline-observed holidays (see Section 11)
- Emergency leave requests outside business hours: the employee contacts their manager directly, and the manager notifies the Leave Coordinator on the next business day

## 2. Company Description

Ridgeline Gear Co. is a specialty outdoor products manufacturer founded in 2003 and headquartered in Fort Collins, Colorado. The company designs and manufactures technical backpacks, climbing hardware, and performance outerwear for specialty retail and direct-to-consumer channels.

All operations are consolidated at a single Fort Collins campus: corporate offices, manufacturing floor, finished-goods warehouse, and a small on-site retail outlet. The company employs approximately 900 people, roughly 620 non-exempt production and warehouse workers, 250 exempt corporate staff, and 30 retail and facilities staff. All employees, including the small number of fully-remote workers, must be Colorado residents as a matter of company policy.

The HR department consists of the HR Director, a Benefits Manager, a Leave Coordinator (this role), two HR Generalists, a Payroll Lead, and a Safety & Workers' Comp Coordinator. General Counsel is provided on a shared basis from parent legal entity Ridgeline Holdings LLC.

The Leave Coordinator reports directly to the Benefits Manager. The Leave Coordinator is the first point of contact for all employee leave requests and is responsible for intake, eligibility determination, notices, tracking, and closure. The Leave Coordinator does not make accommodation decisions, denial decisions beyond clear ineligibility, or payroll determinations - see Section 5 for authority limits.

### Ridgeline Leave - Contact Information

- Leaves email: [leaves@ridgelinegear.com](mailto:leaves@ridgelinegear.com)
- Escalations email: [benefits@ridgelinegear.com](mailto:benefits@ridgelinegear.com)
- Office hours: Monday – Friday, 8:00 am – 5:00 pm Mountain Time (MT)
- Closed: all company-observed holidays (Section 11)

## 3. Definitions & Vocabulary

The following terms are used throughout this document. A junior employee must understand every term before handling cases independently.

| Term                        | Definition                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ADA                         | Americans with Disabilities Act. Federal law requiring reasonable accommodation for qualified individuals with disabilities.                                                                                     |
| CDLE                        | Colorado Department of Labor and Employment. State agency enforcing Colorado labor laws including FMLI and HFWA.                                                                                                 |
| Concurrent Designation      | Designating a single leave event as covered by more than one law or policy simultaneously (e.g., FMLA and FMLI running together). Required whenever the same qualifying event triggers multiple applicable laws. |
| Continuous Leave            | An uninterrupted leave from the first day through the last day of the approved period.                                                                                                                           |
| Designation Notice (WH-382) | The required written notice informing the employee whether their leave has been designated as FMLA-qualifying. Must be sent within 5                                                                             |

| Term                           | Definition                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                | business days of the Leave Coordinator having sufficient information to make the determination.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| DOL                            | U.S. Department of Labor. Federal agency enforcing FMLA.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Eligibility Notice (WH-381)    | The required written notice informing the employee whether they are FMLA-eligible. Must be sent within 5 business days of the employee's leave request.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Eligible Employee (FMLA)       | An employee who (1) has worked for Ridgeline for at least 12 months total (not necessarily consecutive), (2) has worked at least 1,250 hours in the 12 months immediately preceding the leave start date, and (3) works at a worksite with 50 or more employees within a 75-mile radius. At Ridgeline, criterion (3) is met by every employee because the entire workforce, including remote workers, is at the Fort Collins campus. |
| Exempt / Non-Exempt            | Under the FLSA, exempt employees are salaried and not entitled to overtime; non-exempt employees are paid hourly and entitled to overtime. For FMLA hours calculation: non-exempt hours come from hours_worked_log.xlsx; exempt hours are imputed at 40 hours per week unless actual timesheet data is on file.                                                                                                                      |
| FAMLI                          | Colorado Family and Medical Leave Insurance. State program providing up to 12 weeks of paid leave (16 in limited cases) for qualifying reasons. Administered by CDLE; the employer's role is coordination only, not wage replacement.                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Fitness-for-Duty Certification | A medical provider's written statement confirming an employee can return to work, with or without restrictions. Required before return to work when the leave was taken for the employee's own serious health condition.                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| FMLA                           | Family and Medical Leave Act (federal). Provides up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave in a rolling 12-month period for qualifying reasons; up to 26 weeks for military caregiver leave.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| FTE                            | Full-Time Equivalent. A measure of employment status: 1.0 FTE = 40 hours per week; 0.5 FTE = 20 hours per week.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| GINA                           | Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act. Federal law restricting employer collection and use of genetic information, including family medical history.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| HFWA                           | Colorado Healthy Families and Workplaces Act. Requires employers to provide up to 48 hours of paid sick leave per year for qualifying reasons.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Intermittent Leave             | Leave taken in separate blocks of time for a single qualifying reason (e.g., physical therapy appointments, migraine episodes).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |

| <b>Term</b>                      | <b>Definition</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Key Employee                     | Under FMLA, a salaried employee in the top 10 percent of company earners who may, in limited circumstances, be denied job restoration. Ridgeline rarely invokes this status; any key employee designation must be approved by the Benefits Manager. |
| Leave Year (Ridgeline)           | Ridgeline uses the rolling 12-month period measured backward from the first day of any current FMLA leave use. See Section 23 for the calculation method.                                                                                           |
| LTD                              | Long-Term Disability. An insured benefit administered separately from FMLA/FAMLI. Out of scope for this SOP - route to Benefits Manager.                                                                                                            |
| Medical Certification            | A healthcare provider's written statement documenting a serious health condition, using DOL form WH-380-E (employee's own condition) or WH-380-F (family member's condition).                                                                       |
| Reduced Schedule Leave           | Leave that reduces an employee's normal daily or weekly work schedule (e.g., working 6 hours per day instead of 8).                                                                                                                                 |
| Rights & Responsibilities Notice | A section of form WH-381 informing the employee of their FMLA rights and obligations. Must accompany the Eligibility Notice.                                                                                                                        |
| Rolling 12-Month Period          | The FMLA leave year method used at Ridgeline: a 12-month period measured backward from the first day of any current FMLA leave use. Available FMLA hours are recalculated at every new use.                                                         |
| Serious Health Condition         | Under FMLA, an illness, injury, impairment, or physical or mental condition that involves inpatient care or continuing treatment by a healthcare provider, as further defined in 29 CFR §825.113.                                                   |
| STD                              | Short-Term Disability. An insured benefit. Out of scope for this SOP - all STD questions are routed to the Benefits Manager.                                                                                                                        |
| USERRA                           | Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act. Federal law protecting the employment of military servicemembers.                                                                                                                        |
| WC                               | Workers' Compensation. State-administered insurance program for work-related injuries. Administered at Ridgeline by the Safety & Workers' Comp Coordinator; out of scope for this SOP.                                                              |

### 3.1 Dates & Times

All times in this document are in Mountain Time (MT, UTC-7 standard time / UTC-6 daylight time). Fort Collins observes Daylight Saving Time. Use YYYY-MM-DD (ISO 8601) format in all date fields. When logging timestamps in leave\_tracker.xlsx, use YYYY-MM-DD HH:MM MT.

Business days mean Monday through Friday, excluding Ridgeline-observed holidays listed in Section 11. Calendar days include weekends and holidays. This distinction is critical for FMLA notice clocks - the Eligibility Notice and Designation Notice each use a 5-business-day clock, but the medical certification return window uses a 15-calendar-day clock. See Section 7.

## 4. Team & Contacts

The email domain is [ridgelinegear.com](mailto:ridgelinegear.com) unless otherwise noted. Slack handles follow the format @firstname.lastname unless otherwise noted.

| Role                                     | Name             | Email                                                                                              | Slack             |
|------------------------------------------|------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| HR Director                              | Daniel Whitfield | <a href="mailto:d.whitfield@ridgelinegear.com">d.whitfield@ridgelinegear.com</a>                   | @daniel.whitfield |
| Benefits Manager (direct supervisor)     | Renata Okafor    | <a href="mailto:r.okafor@ridgelinegear.com">r.okafor@ridgelinegear.com</a>                         | @renata.okafor    |
| Leave Coordinator (this role)            | [You]            | <a href="mailto:leaves@ridgelinegear.com">leaves@ridgelinegear.com</a>                             | @leaves-hr        |
| HR Generalist – Employee Relations       | Meera Patel      | <a href="mailto:m.patel@ridgelinegear.com">m.patel@ridgelinegear.com</a>                           | @meera.patel      |
| HR Generalist – Onboarding               | Jordan Briggs    | <a href="mailto:j.briggs@ridgelinegear.com">j.briggs@ridgelinegear.com</a>                         | @jordan.briggs    |
| Payroll Lead                             | Teresa Vang      | <a href="mailto:t.vang@ridgelinegear.com">t.vang@ridgelinegear.com</a>                             | @teresa.vang      |
| Safety & Workers' Comp Coordinator       | Luis Arredondo   | <a href="mailto:l.arredondo@ridgelinegear.com">l.arredondo@ridgelinegear.com</a>                   | @luis.arredondo   |
| General Counsel (Ridgeline Holdings LLC) | Evelyn Marchetti | <a href="mailto:evelyn.marchetti@ridgelineholdings.com">evelyn.marchetti@ridgelineholdings.com</a> | @evelyn.marchetti |
| IT Access Manager                        | Samir Haddad     | <a href="mailto:s.haddad@ridgelinegear.com">s.haddad@ridgelinegear.com</a>                         | @samir.haddad     |

## 5. Authority & Decision Limits

The Leave Coordinator's role has tightly scoped decision authority. Any decision outside the limits below requires written approval from the listed authority BEFORE any communication with the employee or manager. **When in doubt, escalate.**

### 5.1 Decisions the Leave Coordinator may make independently

- Determine FMLA eligibility based on the three eligibility criteria (Section 23) when all required data is available in [employee\\_roster.xlsx](#) and [hours\\_worked\\_log.xlsx](#).
- Send the FMLA Eligibility Notice (WH-381).

- Send the FMLA Designation Notice (WH-382) when the certification is complete and sufficient.
- Request medical certification using WH-380-E or WH-380-F.
- Calculate the rolling 12-month FMLA balance per Section 23.
- Log leave usage in leave\_tracker.xlsx, leave\_history.xlsx, and famli\_coordination\_log.xlsx.
- Answer employee questions about HFWA balances using hfw\_balance\_tracker.xlsx. PTO balance questions must be routed to the Payroll Lead (Teresa Vang) per Section 17.3 - the LC does not access or report PTO balances directly.
- Acknowledge receipt of ADA accommodation requests and route to the HR Director.
- Close out completed continuous leave cases where the employee returns on the scheduled return date with no outstanding issues.
- Deny FMLA leave on the basis of clear ineligibility only: (a) tenure less than 12 months, confirmed from employee\_roster.xlsx; or (b) hours worked less than 1,250 in the preceding 12 months for non-exempt employees only, confirmed from hours\_worked\_log.xlsx. For exempt employees, escalate to the Benefits Manager even when imputed hours appear below 1,250, because the imputation involves judgment that is outside the LC's authority.

## **5.2 Decisions requiring Benefits Manager approval (Renata Okafor)**

- Determining whether a medical certification is "incomplete" versus "insufficient." FMLA distinguishes between these, and the required employer response differs.
- Any FMLA or FAMLI denial other than clear ineligibility as described in 5.1.
- Intermittent leave pattern concerns, suspected abuse, or a pattern inconsistent with the certified frequency.
- Any leave extension request beyond the 12-week cap (or 26-week cap for military caregiver leave).
- Key Employee designations.
- HFWA classification disputes, e.g., whether a stated reason qualifies under HFWA.
- Retroactive leave designation requests.
- Any non-exempt case where hours\_worked\_log.xlsx data is incomplete or in dispute.
- FAMLI concurrent designation where the FAMLI and FMLA qualifying reasons appear to diverge.

## **5.3 Decisions requiring HR Director approval (Daniel Whitfield)**

- All ADA accommodation decisions. The Leave Coordinator's intake role is limited to receipt, acknowledgment, and routing; the HR Director owns the interactive process.
- Fitness-for-duty certification disputes, e.g., the provider clears the employee with restrictions that Ridgeline cannot accommodate.
- Failure-to-return-to-work cases.
- Any case where discipline, demotion, or termination is being contemplated during, immediately after, or in connection with a leave.

#### 5.4 Decisions requiring General Counsel (Evelyn Marchetti)

- Any employee communication mentioning an attorney, the EEOC, the CDLE, the DOL, the Colorado Civil Rights Division, or a lawsuit.
- Retroactive leave designation where the employee is disputing prior attendance discipline.
- Any GINA-related concern, e.g., a medical certification that contains genetic or family medical history information beyond what was requested.
- Any case where the employee is simultaneously involved in active litigation with Ridgeline.

#### 5.5 Actions the Leave Coordinator must NEVER take

- Disclose any employee medical information to the employee's manager, coworkers, or any third party beyond the minimum necessary for administering the leave (e.g., dates of absence are permitted; the nature of the medical condition is not).
- Promise retroactive leave designation.
- Confirm or deny whether an employee is on any type of leave to an external caller, vendor, reference-check request, or anyone outside the HR team.
- Discuss one employee's leave with another employee, even if they share a manager.
- Issue, modify, or approve any payroll transaction.
- Store medical certifications and any document containing protected health information ONLY in [Employee\_ID]/ (restricted access).
- Include medical details, diagnoses, or protected health information in any email, Slack message, or shared document.

### 6. Tools, Files & Systems

Verify all information from the sources below before responding. Do not rely on memory. All files are located on the unless otherwise noted.

| Source                | Contents                                                                                                                                                                                                              | When to Use                                                                                                 |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| employee_roster.xlsx  | Master active-employee list: Employee ID, Full Name, Work Email, Personal Email, Hire Date, FTE, Job Title, Department, Work Location, Manager Name, Manager Email, Exempt/Non-Exempt, Union Status, Residence State. | All intake steps (employee identity verification); FMLA eligibility (tenure check); manager contact lookup. |
| hours_worked_log.xlsx | Rolling 12-month hours worked, by employee, updated every Monday by Payroll. Non-exempt hours are actual; exempt hours are imputed at 40 hours per week unless a timesheet is on file.                                | FMLA 1,250-hour eligibility test (Section 23).                                                              |

| Source                                                                                                                           | Contents                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | When to Use                                                                                                                                      |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| leave_tracker.xlsx                                                                                                               | Active and recently closed leave cases: Case ID, Employee ID, Leave Type(s), Start Date, Expected End Date, Actual End Date, Continuous/Intermittent, Hours/Days Used, Rolling Balance, Medical Cert Status, Manager Notified (Y/N/Date), Case Status, Notes. | Every case - open, update at every step, close.                                                                                                  |
| leave_history.xlsx                                                                                                               | Historical leave usage per employee for the prior 24 months: Case ID, Employee ID, Leave Type, Start Date, End Date, Hours Used, Reason Category.                                                                                                             | Rolling 12-month FMLA balance calculation (Section 23); pattern identification (Section 22).                                                     |
| famli_coordination_log.xlsx                                                                                                      | FAMLI claim coordination: Employee ID, FAMLI Claim ID, Claim Start Date, Claim Status, Concurrent FMLA Case ID, Employer Response Status.                                                                                                                     | All FAMLI-qualifying leave cases (Section 14).                                                                                                   |
| hfw_a_balance_tracker.xlsx                                                                                                       | HFWA sick leave accrual and usage per employee: Employee ID, YTD Accrued, YTD Used, Current Balance, Last Accrual Date.                                                                                                                                       | HFWA sick leave requests (Section 18); balance inquiries; reclassification checks.                                                               |
| WH-380-E, WH-380-F, WH-381, WH-382, WH-384, WH-385, CO_FAMLI_Employee_Notice.pdf, CO_HFWA_Notice.pdf, Ridgeline_Leave_Policy.pdf | Blank DOL and Colorado forms                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Attach to employee notices per the relevant procedure. Never modify the blank forms; save completed forms to the employee's medical file folder. |
| (PDF folder, restricted access)                                                                                                  | Completed medical certifications, fitness-for-duty notes, ADA intake forms. Access restricted to HR Director, Benefits Manager, and Leave Coordinator.                                                                                                        | Filing only. Never attach any file from this folder to any outgoing email or post its contents in any Slack channel.                             |
| Google Calendar - "HR Leave Deadlines"                                                                                           | All active case deadlines: eligibility notice due, designation notice due, certification return due, scheduled return-to-work dates, intermittent leave review dates.                                                                                         | Add an event at every step that creates a new deadline (see Section 11).                                                                         |

## 7. Internal Communication: Slack Channels

All internal communications about leave cases must use the designated Slack channels below. Direct messages are not permitted for case-related communication because they cannot be audited.

| Channel               | When to Use                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| #leave-intake         | Primary Leave Coordinator channel. All routine case notifications: new intake confirmations, eligibility decisions, certification status, scheduled return-to-work reminders. Default channel when uncertain which to use. |
| #benefits-team        | Benefits team coordination. Questions to the Benefits Manager (Renata Okafor) and coordination on cases touching multiple benefits areas.                                                                                  |
| #hr-escalations       | Escalations requiring HR Director attention (Daniel Whitfield): denials beyond clear ineligibility, failure-to-return cases, pattern flags per Section 12, any case where discipline is being contemplated.                |
| #payroll-coordination | Payroll handoffs only. Notify the Payroll Lead (Teresa Vang) of leave start dates, leave end dates, transitions to unpaid status, and return-to-work dates. Do not post non-payroll-related case information here.         |
| #legal-review         | General Counsel attention (Evelyn Marchetti) legal threats, EEOC/CDLE/DOL mentions, retroactive designation disputes, GINA concerns, any case involving active litigation.                                                 |
| #unknown-senders-hr   | Any leave-related email from a sender not found in employee_roster.xlsx: former employees, applicants, personal contacts of employees, misdirected emails, general inquiries.                                              |

*Never post medical details, diagnoses, or any protected health information in any Slack channel under any circumstances. Case notifications should reference only the Case ID from leave\_tracker.xlsx and the minimum case metadata needed for the intended audience, never the nature of the medical condition.*

## 8. Leave Types Handled

The table below summarizes every leave type within the Leave Coordinator's scope. A single leave event frequently triggers multiple types simultaneously, for example, an employee's own serious health condition can trigger FMLA, FAMILI, HFWA, and PTO substitution at the same time. When multiple types apply, concurrent designation is required. See Sections 6 and 9.

| <b>Leave Type</b>               | <b>Governing Law / Policy</b> | <b>Eligibility</b>                                                                                                        | <b>Paid?</b>                      | <b>Max Duration</b>                                                    | <b>Initial Deadline / SOP Section</b>                                       |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| FMLA                            | Federal (29 USC §2601)        | 12 months tenure + 1,250 hours worked in prior 12 months + 50-employee/75-mile worksite (all Ridgeline employees meet #3) | No                                | 12 weeks per rolling 12-month period (26 weeks for military caregiver) | Eligibility Notice within 5 business days - Section 8                       |
| CO FAMLI                        | Colorado (C.R.S. 8-13.3-501)  | Earned at least \$2,500 in wages in the base period (prior 4 of 5 quarters)                                               | Yes (paid by CDLE)                | 12 weeks (16 weeks for pregnancy complications)                        | Employer response to CDLE within 5 business days - Section 14               |
| ADA Accommodation (intake only) | Federal (42 USC §12101)       | Qualified individual with a disability                                                                                    | N/A                               | N/A (not leave)                                                        | Same-day acknowledgment; route to HR Director - Section 15                  |
| HFWA Sick Leave                 | Colorado (C.R.S. 8-13.3-401)  | All employees from day 1; accrues 1 hour per 30 hours worked                                                              | Yes                               | 48 hours per calendar year; 48-hour balance cap                        | No advance notice required - Section 11                                     |
| Company PTO                     | Ridgeline Handbook §4.2       | All benefited employees (≥0.5 FTE); accrues day 1                                                                         | Yes                               | 200-hour balance cap                                                   | Manager approval; 2 weeks notice requested for foreseeable use - Section 11 |
| Bereavement Leave               | Ridgeline Handbook §4.5       | All benefited employees                                                                                                   | Yes                               | 3 days immediate family / 1 day extended family                        | Documentation within 30 calendar days of loss - Section 11                  |
| Jury Duty Leave                 | Colorado law + Handbook §4.6  | All employees                                                                                                             | Yes (regular wages less jury pay) | Length of service                                                      | Summons to HR within 2 business days of receipt - Section 11                |

| Leave Type            | Governing Law / Policy  | Eligibility                                 | Paid?                            | Max Duration                            | Initial Deadline / SOP Section                                  |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| USERRA / Military     | Federal (38 USC §4301)  | All military servicemembers                 | No (pay differential per policy) | Up to 5 years cumulative                | Advance notice unless military necessity - escalate; Section 11 |
| Personal Unpaid Leave | Ridgeline Handbook §4.8 | Benefited employees; discretionary approval | No                               | Up to 30 calendar days; extensions rare | Manager + HR Director approval - escalate; Section 11           |

*Short-term disability (STD), long-term disability (LTD), and workers' compensation (WC) are outside this SOP's scope. STD and LTD questions are routed to the Benefits Manager. WC questions are routed to the Safety & Workers' Comp Coordinator. However, the Leave Coordinator must still designate and track FMLA/FAMLI for any qualifying leave that also involves STD or WC, because these laws may run concurrently.*

## 9. Intake & Triage Procedure

Every incoming leave-related email or Slack message must be triaged before any other action. Emails originating from internal HR team members or from Payroll are exempt from the sender verification step (Step 1) but still follow all other steps.

### 9.1 Triage Steps

Perform the following steps in order. Do not skip steps even if they appear obvious for a particular case.

- **Step 1:** Verify the sender is an active employee in employee\_roster.xlsx. Match on email address, not display name. If the sender is not found, post to #unknown-senders-hr using the format: UNRECOGNIZED SENDER: [Sender Name], [Sender Email], [Subject Line], and forward the email to the Benefits Manager (Renata Okafor). Do not reply to the sender until instructed by the Benefits Manager. Exception - apparent ADA accommodation request from an unverified sender: if the email appears to contain a request for a workplace accommodation or disability-related modification (per the recognition criteria in Section 15.1), also forward it to the HR Director (d.whitfield@ridgelinegear.com) with subject line "ADA ACCOMMODATION REQUEST - UNVERIFIED SENDER" and post to #hr-escalations, without waiting for Benefits Manager instruction. ADA intake obligations exist regardless of whether the sender can be verified; the Benefits Manager will continue to investigate the sender's identity in parallel.
- **Step 2:** Confirm the sender is writing about their own leave. If the sender is a manager asking about a direct report's leave, follow Section 16 (Working With Managers) instead of this procedure. If the sender is another HR team member, respond per the internal request.

- **Step 3:** Identify every leave type that may apply to the request using the Section 8 comparison table. A single request frequently triggers multiple leave types (see Section 8).
- **Step 4:** Open leave\_tracker.xlsx and search for any existing open case for this employee. If an open case exists, determine whether the new message is (a) a continuation of the open case, (b) a new case on top of an existing one (e.g., a new medical event during an intermittent leave), or (c) a duplicate. Update the existing case or open a new Case ID accordingly.
- **Step 5:** Open leave\_history.xlsx and review the employee's leave usage in the prior 12 months. This is required for FMLA rolling balance calculations (Section 23) and for pattern identification (Section 22).
- **Step 6:** Verify that the minimum intake data per Section 9.2 is present. If any required field is missing, reply to the employee requesting the missing information before opening the case. Do not guess or infer missing data.
- **Step 7:** Assign a priority level per the Priority Matrix in Section 10.
- **Step 8:** If a new case is needed, open a Case ID in leave\_tracker.xlsx with all applicable leave types, the priority, and the minimum intake data.
- **Step 9:** Act per the relevant section of this SOP for each applicable leave type. Use the designated email template from Section 26.
- **Step 10:** Post a case notification to the relevant Slack channel per Section 7.
- **Step 11:** Add any new incomplete deadlines (eligibility notice due, certification return due, scheduled return-to-work date, etc.) to the HR Leave Deadlines Google Calendar per Section 11.
- **Step 12:** Complete email housekeeping per Section 25.

## 9.2 Minimum Intake Data

Before opening a case in leave\_tracker.xlsx, confirm that the following fields are available. Do not guess or infer missing data. Do not ask the employee for any medical detail beyond the reason category.

- Employee identity: full name and Employee ID, both confirmed against employee\_roster.xlsx.
- Requested leave start date (or the date leave began, if the employee is requesting retroactive designation, see Section 5.2).
- Requested leave end date or expected duration ("unknown / ongoing" is acceptable).
- Reason category only, select from: (a) employee's own serious health condition; (b) family member's serious health condition; (c) bonding with a new child (birth, adoption, or foster placement); (d) qualifying exigency (military family); (e) military caregiver; (f) bereavement; (g) jury duty; (h) military service; (i) other. Do not ask for and do not record medical diagnoses at intake.
- Continuous, intermittent, or reduced schedule leave, if known.
- Whether the need is foreseeable (30+ calendar days advance notice possible) or unforeseeable.
- Manager name (retrieve from employee\_roster.xlsx if the employee does not state it).
- Contact preference during leave (work email, personal email, or phone).
- Any supporting documentation attached to the request.

If fewer than 5 of the above fields are available from the initial message, reply using Template 1 and do not open a case until the minimum data is complete. If only the employee identity and start date are present, that is enough to open a case for acknowledgment only, as long as the acknowledgment email also requests the missing fields.

### **9.3 Multi-Leave-Type Requests**

Most serious leave requests trigger more than one type simultaneously. When this happens:

- Open ONE Case ID in leave\_tracker.xlsx with all applicable leave types listed in the "Leave Type(s)" column.
- Handle each applicable type per its relevant section of this SOP.
- Send one consolidated acknowledgment email to the employee, not separate emails for each leave type.
- Apply the highest priority level of any individual component to the whole case for SLA purposes (Section 11).
- Concurrent designation is the DEFAULT whenever two or more leave types cover the same event. For example, an employee's own serious health condition almost always triggers both FMLA and FAMILI; these must run concurrently. See Section 14.

Common multi-type combinations:

- Employee's own serious health condition: FMLA + FAMILI + possibly HFWA + possibly PTO substitution.
- Birth and bonding: FMLA + FAMILI + PTO.
- Family member's serious health condition: FMLA + FAMILI.
- Intermittent medical appointments: FMLA + possibly HFWA for specific appointment days.
- Work-related injury: workers' compensation (routed to the Safety Coordinator) + possibly FMLA + possibly FAMILI. The Leave Coordinator handles the FMLA/FAMILI designation; the Safety Coordinator handles the WC claim.

### **9.4 Replies to Previous Emails**

Treat every reply as a new message requiring triage, even if it is part of a long thread. Read the prior context in the case notes, but do not assume prior actions are complete. Check leave\_tracker.xlsx for the current case status. If the reply contains new information, such as a returned certification, a date change, a new qualifying event, or a new question, update the case accordingly and follow the relevant procedure. Do not re-send templates that have already been sent in the thread; reference the prior notice by date and subject line instead.

## **10. Priority Matrix**

Every case must be assigned a priority at intake (Step 7 of Section 9). Priority drives the internal response-time SLA in Section 22. Note that any statutory deadline under Section 11 always supersedes the internal SLA. If an Eligibility Notice is due tomorrow but the case would otherwise be P4, the statutory deadline wins.

| Priority      | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Examples                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|---------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| P1 - Urgent   | Requires same-business-day action. Any case where a statutory deadline expires today or tomorrow, any case involving a legal threat, any case involving potential job abandonment, or any case involving an employee who is currently unable to work and has no open leave case. | Employee hospitalized and will miss next scheduled shift with no prior leave case open; bereavement for immediate family; active military orders with less than 72 hours notice; FMLA Eligibility Notice due today or tomorrow; medical certification 15-calendar-day window expires today; email mentions attorney, EEOC, or CDLE; manager reports an employee has been out 3 or more consecutive days without notice; ADA request where the employee states they cannot perform essential functions as of today. |
| P2 - High     | Requires action within 1 business day. Foreseeable leaves submitted without the full 30-day notice, approaching but not imminent deadlines, patterns requiring review, and urgent accommodation requests.                                                                        | Foreseeable FMLA or FAMILI request submitted with less than 30 days notice; fitness-for-duty certification required for a return scheduled within the next 2 business days; medical certification 15-calendar-day window expires in 1 to 2 days; pattern flag case per Section 12; ADA accommodation request with stated urgency but not immediate; intermittent leave absences occurring noticeably above certified frequency.                                                                                    |
| P3 - Standard | Requires action within 2 business days. Routine leave administration and standard case updates.                                                                                                                                                                                  | Standard foreseeable FMLA or FAMILI request with 30+ days notice; routine intermittent leave absence log; HFWA sick leave request with complete information; PTO, bereavement, or jury duty question with documentation provided; routine case updates; routine certification receipts; standard medical certification request.                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| P4 - Low      | Requires action within 3 business days. Informational requests that do not directly affect a statutory clock.                                                                                                                                                                    | Balance inquiries (PTO, HFWA, FMLA remaining); general policy questions (direct to the Ridgeline Leave Policy PDF); document requests (copy of prior notice, policy document); compliments and feedback.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

## 11. Deadlines, Calendar Rules & Clock Calculations

Leave administration is deadline-driven. Missing a statutory deadline can expose Ridgeline to liability and can grant the employee rights they would not otherwise have. The Leave Coordinator must know the difference between business days and calendar days, must know when each clock starts, and must log every deadline in the HR Leave Deadlines Google Calendar at the moment it is triggered.

## 11.1 Business Days vs. Calendar Days

This distinction is critical.

- Business day: Monday through Friday, excluding Ridgeline-observed holidays listed in Section 11. A day on which the HR office is closed is NOT a business day.
- Calendar day: every day of the week, including Saturday, Sunday, and holidays.

Which rule uses which clock:

- FMLA Eligibility Notice: 5 BUSINESS days.
- FMLA Designation Notice: 5 BUSINESS days.
- FAMLI employer response to CDLE: 5 BUSINESS days.
- Medical certification return window: 15 CALENDAR days.
- Incomplete certification cure window: 7 CALENDAR days.
- Bereavement documentation: 30 CALENDAR days.
- Jury duty summons submission: 2 BUSINESS days.

**CRITICAL (Leave Coordinator only): All deadlines above represent the MAXIMUM time the Leave Coordinator is allowed to complete an action. These are not waiting periods. If all necessary information is available to complete an action (e.g., sending an Eligibility Notice or Designation Notice), send the notice immediately rather than waiting for the deadline to pass. Do not artificially delay notifications when you have sufficient information. NOTE: Employees are not bound by this requirement - they have the full deadline period to provide information or respond.**

## 11.2 When Each Clock Starts

- Eligibility Notice clock: starts on the calendar date of the employee's leave request. Even if the request arrives after business hours or on a weekend, Day 0 is that calendar date and Day 1 is the next business day.
- Designation Notice clock: starts on the calendar date the Leave Coordinator has "sufficient information" to determine whether the leave qualifies - typically the date a complete medical certification is received. If the certification is incomplete or insufficient, the clock pauses while the employee is given 7 calendar days to cure.
- Medical certification return clock: starts on the calendar date the employee receives the request. For an email sent during business hours (before 5:00pm MT on a business day), presume same-day receipt. For an email sent after 5:00pm MT or on a non-business day, presume receipt on the next business day.
- FAMLI employer response clock: starts on the calendar date Ridgeline receives the CDLE notice of the employee's FAMLI claim via email at famli-employer@ridgelinegear.com. The email's Date header timestamp governs.

## 11.3 Counting Business Days

## 11.4 Counting Calendar Days

## 11.5 Deadline Matrix

The table below lists every routine deadline the Leave Coordinator is responsible for. Every deadline created by a case must be added to the HR Leave Deadlines Google Calendar as a separate event at the moment the triggering action occurs.

| Trigger                                                        | Deadline       | Clock Type | Owner (Form)                                 | Consequence if Missed                                                                 |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|------------|----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Employee submits FMLA leave request                            | 5 days         | Business   | Leave Coordinator (WH-381)                   | Employee may be entitled to leave as if eligible; potential DOL liability.            |
| Leave Coordinator receives complete medical certification      | 5 days         | Business   | Leave Coordinator (WH-382)                   | Leave is automatically treated as FMLA-qualifying regardless of actual qualification. |
| Leave Coordinator requests medical certification from employee | 15 days        | Calendar   | Employee (WH-380-E or WH-380-F)              | Leave may be denied; escalate to Benefits Manager.                                    |
| Employee notified certification is incomplete                  | 7 days to cure | Calendar   | Employee                                     | Cert may be treated as insufficient; escalate to Benefits Manager.                    |
| CDLE issues FAMLII claim notice to Ridgeline                   | 5 days         | Business   | Leave Coordinator (FAMLII Employer Response) | Ridgeline loses right to contest; FAMLII claim proceeds as filed.                     |
| Employee submits ADA accommodation request                     | Same day       | N/A        | Leave Coordinator → HR Director              | Potential ADA liability; route to HR Director immediately.                            |
| Employee returns from FMLA for own serious health condition    | Day of return  | N/A        | Employee (fitness-for-duty cert)             | Employee may not return to duty until cert received; escalate to HR Director.         |
| Active intermittent leave case review                          | Every 30 days  | Calendar   | Leave Coordinator                            | Pattern issues may not be detected; update recurring issue log (Section 22).          |

| Trigger                             | Deadline          | Clock Type | Owner (Form)                             | Consequence if Missed             |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Employee requests bereavement leave | 30 days from loss | Calendar   | Employee (obituary or death certificate) | Leave may be reclassified as PTO. |
| Employee receives a jury summons    | 2 days            | Business   | Employee (jury summons)                  | Leave may be reclassified as PTO. |

## 11.6 Ridgeline-Observed Holidays - 2026

On the dates below, the HR office is closed, Ridgeline observes the holiday, and the day does NOT count as a business day for any FMLA, FAMILI, or internal SLA clock. Calendar-day clocks continue to run through holidays.

| Holiday                     | 2026 Date            |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| New Year's Day              | Thursday, 01/01/2026 |
| Martin Luther King Jr. Day  | Monday, 01/19/2026   |
| Presidents' Day             | Monday, 02/16/2026   |
| Memorial Day                | Monday, 05/25/2026   |
| Juneteenth                  | Friday, 06/19/2026   |
| Independence Day (observed) | Friday, 07/03/2026   |
| Labor Day                   | Monday, 09/07/2026   |
| Thanksgiving Day            | Thursday, 11/26/2026 |
| Day after Thanksgiving      | Friday, 11/27/2026   |
| Christmas Eve               | Thursday, 12/24/2026 |
| Christmas Day               | Friday, 12/25/2026   |

## 12. Service Level Agreement

The internal SLA defines how quickly the Leave Coordinator must respond to a case once it has been assigned a priority level per Section 17. The SLA is a floor, not a ceiling - cases should be handled as promptly as workload allows.

### 12.1 Response Time Targets by Priority

- P1 - Urgent: same business day. Acknowledgment and initial action must occur before close of business (5:00pm MT) on the business day the case is received. If a P1 case arrives after 3:00pm MT, initial action must still occur the same business day; full resolution may carry into the next business day.

- P2 - High: within 1 business day of receipt.
- P3 - Standard: within 2 business days of receipt.
- P4 - Low: within 3 business days of receipt.

## **12.2 Statutory Deadlines Always Supersede Internal SLA**

Any statutory deadline from the Section 11 Deadline Matrix overrides the internal SLA. If a case is P4 by normal priority but the FMLA Eligibility Notice is due tomorrow, the statutory deadline wins and the case must be handled today. When a statutory deadline and an internal SLA conflict, always act on the earlier of the two.

## **12.3 SLA Clock Rules**

- SLAs are measured from the earlier of (a) the email timestamp or (b) the Case ID creation time in leave\_tracker.xlsx.
- SLAs pause on weekends and Ridgeline-observed holidays - internal SLAs use business days only.
- For a multi-type request, the SLA is set by the highest-priority component and applies to the whole case.
- If a case is awaiting a response from the employee (e.g., medical certification has been requested), the internal SLA pauses but the statutory clock continues. Document the pause in the case notes with the date and reason. If a statutory deadline (Section 11.5 Deadline Matrix) will expire while the SLA is paused, do not wait for the SLA to resume - immediately escalate to the Benefits Manager via #benefits-team with the message: "STATUTORY DEADLINE AT RISK: Case [Case ID], [Deadline Type], expires [Date]." If the statutory deadline has already passed, log the breach in leave\_tracker.xlsx and escalate per Section 12.4.

## **12.4 SLA Breaches and Near-Breaches**

- If a case has reached 50% of its SLA window without substantive action, post an alert to #benefits-team using the format: SLA WARNING: Case [Case ID], [Priority], [Current Status], [Time Remaining].
- If a case breaches its SLA, log the breach in leave\_tracker.xlsx with a note ("SLA breach: [reason]"), post to #benefits-team, and continue handling the case on a priority basis.
- If a case breaches BOTH its internal SLA and a statutory deadline from Section 11, immediately escalate to the Benefits Manager via #benefits-team AND forward the employee email thread to r.okafor@ridgelinegear.com with subject line "STATUTORY DEADLINE BREACH - Case [Case ID]". Do not communicate with the employee about the breach until directed by the Benefits Manager.

## **13. FMLA Leave Procedure**

This section describes the end-to-end procedure for handling FMLA leave requests. FMLA is the most complex leave type the Leave Coordinator administers. It has strict eligibility thresholds, strict notice deadlines, a rolling-balance calculation, and an incomplete-versus-insufficient certification distinction. Follow this section carefully. When in doubt, escalate per Section 5.

### 13.1 Eligibility Determination

An employee is FMLA-eligible only if all three of the following criteria are met:

- Criterion 1 - Tenure: the employee has been employed by Ridgeline for at least 12 months, total (not necessarily consecutive). Breaks in service longer than 7 years do not count toward tenure unless the break was due to military service or a written agreement between Ridgeline and the employee.
- Criterion 2 - Hours: the employee has worked at least 1,250 hours for Ridgeline in the 12 months immediately preceding the requested leave start date.
- Criterion 3 - Worksite: the employee works at a worksite with at least 50 employees within a 75-mile radius. All Ridgeline employees automatically meet this criterion because the entire workforce, include remote workers, is at the Fort Collins campus.

Procedure:

- Step 1. Open employee\_roster.xlsx and locate the employee by Employee ID.
  - Step 2. Calculate total tenure from Hire Date through the requested leave start date. If total tenure is less than 12 months, the employee is NOT eligible - skip to Step 6.
  - Step 3. Open hours\_worked\_log.xlsx and locate the employee's rolling 12-month hours value as of the requested leave start date. For all employees - non-exempt and exempt - use the value shown in the file directly. The file already contains actual hours for non-exempt employees and pre-imputed hours (40 hours per week of employment) for exempt employees without a timesheet on file. Do NOT recalculate or impute hours yourself. If you suspect the file value may be inaccurate (e.g., the employee took extended unpaid leave during the prior 12 months that may not be reflected in the imputed value), escalate to the Benefits Manager per Section 5.2 before issuing the Eligibility Notice.
  - Step 4. If hours worked in the preceding 12 months is less than 1,250, the employee is NOT eligible - skip to Step 6.
  - Step 5. Criterion 3 is automatically met. If Criteria 1 and 2 are also met, the employee IS eligible. Proceed to Section 23 (notices).
  - Step 6. If any criterion is not met, the employee is NOT eligible. Proceed to Section 23 (denials).
- 
- An employee may still be eligible for Colorado FAMLI even though they are not eligible for FMLA, as FAMLI has no tenure requirement. See Section 14 before closing the case.

### 13.2 Rolling 12-Month Period Calculation

Ridgeline uses the rolling 12-month leave year measured backward from the first day of any current FMLA leave use.

Formula:

- Total FMLA entitlement = employee's regular workweek hours × 12 weeks.
- For a 1.0 FTE employee (40 hours per week):  $40 \times 12 = 480$  hours per rolling year.
- For a 0.75 FTE employee (30 hours per week):  $30 \times 12 = 360$  hours per rolling year.
- For a 0.5 FTE employee (20 hours per week):  $20 \times 12 = 240$  hours per rolling year.

- Military caregiver leave uses a 26-week entitlement (workweek hours × 26) in a single 12-month period, not rolling.

**Procedure:**

- Step 1. From employee\_roster.xlsx, determine the employee's FTE and calculate the regular workweek hours (FTE × 40).
- Step 2. Calculate total FMLA entitlement = regular workweek hours × 12.
- Step 3. Open leave\_history.xlsx. Filter by Employee ID and Leave Type = FMLA.
- Step 4. Sum FMLA hours used where the leave date falls within the 12 months preceding the requested start date (from start\_date minus 12 months through start\_date minus 1 day, inclusive).
- Step 5. Available FMLA hours = total entitlement – hours used in the rolling window.
- Step 6. If available hours is less than the requested leave duration, the employee will exhaust FMLA entitlement during the requested period. Approve up to the available balance only. Any request to extend beyond the available balance must be escalated to the Benefits Manager per Section 5.2.
- Case LC-2025-0142: continuous FMLA 06/15/2025–06/29/2025, 80 hours used.
- Case LC-2025-0331: intermittent FMLA (certified for migraines) during 09/01/2025–12/31/2025, 48 hours used.
- Case LC-2026-0058: intermittent FMLA (same certification, continued) during 01/01/2026–03/31/2026, 32 hours used.
- Total FMLA hours used in the lookback window: 80 + 48 + 32 = 160 hours.
- Step 5: Available FMLA hours as of 04/20/2026 = 480 – 160 = 320 hours.
- Step 6: If Sarah requests a continuous 12-week (480-hour) leave, she will exhaust available entitlement at 320 hours (8 weeks) and cannot use the full 12 weeks. Approve up to 320 hours. Any extension request must be escalated to the Benefits Manager.

*Leave hours used INSIDE the lookback window count against the balance regardless of which case they belong to. A new FMLA case does not reset the rolling balance.*

### 13.3 FMLA Qualifying Reasons

The following reasons qualify for FMLA leave. The reason category determines which certification form is used (if any) and which leave-duration limits apply.

| Qualifying Reason                       | Description                                                                                                                                                                        | Typical Certification Form |
|-----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Employee's own serious health condition | An illness, injury, impairment, or physical or mental condition that involves inpatient care or continuing treatment by a healthcare provider. Further defined in 29 CFR §825.113. | WH-380-E                   |

| Qualifying Reason                        | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Typical Certification Form      |
|------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Family member's serious health condition | Same medical standard, applied to the employee's spouse, parent, or child. "Child" under FMLA includes a child under 18, or an adult child incapable of self-care due to a disability. "Parent" includes in loco parentis relationships. | WH-380-F                        |
| Bonding with a new child                 | Birth of the employee's child, placement of a child for adoption, or placement of a child in foster care. Must be taken within 12 months of the qualifying event.                                                                        | None (no medical certification) |
| Qualifying exigency                      | Specific needs arising from a family member's covered military service (e.g., short-notice deployment, childcare, post-deployment activities).                                                                                           | WH-384                          |
| Military caregiver                       | Caring for a covered servicemember with a serious injury or illness incurred in line of duty. Provides up to 26 weeks in a single 12-month period - not rolling.                                                                         | WH-385                          |

#### Important definitional notes:

- "Parent" under FMLA includes in loco parentis relationships. If an employee claims a parent relationship with someone who is not a biological or adoptive parent, verify the in loco parentis claim is documented. When uncertain, escalate to the Benefits Manager.
- "Child" under FMLA includes biological, adopted, foster, stepchild, legal ward, or in loco parentis child. For a child 18 or older, the child must be incapable of self-care due to a disability.
- "Spouse" under FMLA includes a same-sex spouse in a legal marriage. Domestic partners are NOT included under federal FMLA, but ARE included under Colorado FAMLI - a case involving a domestic partner may be FAMLI-only, not FMLA. See Section 14.
- Colorado FAMLI uses a BROADER family definition that includes siblings, grandparents, grandchildren, and chosen family. Do not assume that a family relationship qualifying for FAMLI also qualifies for FMLA.

### 13.4 Required Notices and Deadlines

FMLA requires three written notices, all using DOL-provided forms. All three must be sent within strict deadlines:

- Eligibility Notice (Part A of WH-381) - within 5 BUSINESS days of the leave request. Tells the employee whether they are FMLA-eligible.
- Rights & Responsibilities Notice (Part B of WH-381) - sent together with the Eligibility Notice. Explains the employee's rights and obligations under FMLA.

- Designation Notice (WH-382) - within 5 BUSINESS days of the Leave Coordinator having sufficient information to determine whether the leave qualifies (typically when a complete medical certification is received). Tells the employee whether the leave is FMLA-designated and how much counts toward their entitlement.

Procedure after eligibility determination (Section 23):

- **Step 1:** Open the blank WH-381 PDF. Complete Part A with the employee's name, Employee ID, requested leave start date, and the eligibility determination. If not eligible, specify the failed criterion (tenure, hours, or both). Complete Part B with the employee's rights and responsibilities.
- **Step 2:** Save the completed WH-381 as a PDF in [Employee\_ID]/ with filename format WH-381\_[Case ID]\_[Date].pdf.
- **Step 3:** Send the completed WH-381 to the employee via email using Template 2. Attach the completed WH-381 PDF.
- **Step 4:** If the employee IS eligible: in the same email, attach a blank WH-380-E (employee's own condition) or WH-380-F (family member's condition) and instruct the employee that the completed medical certification is due within 15 CALENDAR days. See Section 23.
- **Step 5:** Update leave\_tracker.xlsx: populate Eligibility Notice Date, Cert Requested Date (if applicable), Cert Due Date (Cert Requested Date + 15 calendar days), and Case Status = Active - Pending Certification.
- **Step 6:** Add the certification due date as an event in the HR Leave Deadlines Google Calendar.
- **Step 7:** Send an advance-notice email to the employee's manager using Template 11 (limited-disclosure format: anticipated dates and leave type only - no medical details). This is a preliminary notice only; the formal designation notice per Section 16.2 is issued after the medical certification is reviewed and leave is designated. If the start date is immediate and designation cannot wait, note 'pending designation' in the email.
- **Step 8:** Post to #leave-intake using the format: FMLA INTAKE: [Case ID], [Eligibility Status], [Reason Category], [Start Date], [Priority].

Designation Notice procedure - after complete medical certification is received:

- **Step 1:** Verify the certification is complete and sufficient (Section 23). If incomplete or insufficient, do NOT issue the Designation Notice - follow Section 23 instead.
- **Step 2:** Calculate the rolling 12-month balance per Section 23 and determine how many hours/weeks of FMLA will be designated for this case.
- **Step 3:** Open the blank WH-382 PDF. Complete with the leave dates, the amount of FMLA time being designated, and any fitness-for-duty certification requirement (required for continuous leave for own serious health condition - see Section 13).
- **Step 4:** Save the completed WH-382 to [Employee\_ID]/ with filename WH-382\_[Case ID]\_[Date].pdf.
- **Step 5:** Send the WH-382 to the employee via email using Template 4. Attach the completed WH-382 PDF.
- **Step 6:** Update leave\_tracker.xlsx: populate Designation Notice Date and Case Status = Active - Approved. Update Hours/Days Used and Rolling Balance fields.

- **Step 7:** Post to #leave-intake: FMLA DESIGNATED: [Case ID], [Start Date], [Expected End Date], [Hours Designated].
- **Step 8:** Post to #payroll-coordination per Section 17.

### 13.5 Medical Certification

When a leave is for an employee's own or a family member's serious health condition, Ridgeline requires a medical certification on the appropriate DOL form. The employee has 15 calendar days from the date of the request to return a complete and sufficient certification.

Four possible paths based on what the employee returns:

- Path A - Complete and sufficient, received within 15 days: Proceed to Designation Notice (Section 23). This is the normal path.
- Path B - Incomplete, received within 15 days: The form has blank fields or missing signatures that must be filled in. Notify the employee in writing using Template 5, specify exactly which fields are missing, and give the employee 7 CALENDAR days to cure. Do NOT designate the leave until the cured certification is received. Do NOT treat an incomplete certification as insufficient - these are different categories under FMLA.
- Path C - Insufficient, received within 15 days: The form is fully filled in, but the information is vague, ambiguous, or does not clearly answer FMLA's requirements (e.g., the frequency of intermittent episodes is not specified, or the duration is unclear). INSUFFICIENT certifications require judgment and MUST be escalated to the Benefits Manager per Section 5.2. Do not attempt to clarify directly with the provider or employee without the Benefits Manager's direction.
- Path D - Not received by day 15: Send a reminder using Template 6. If the employee provides a documented reason for the delay that falls within the defined list of circumstances beyond the employee's control - (i) the healthcare provider's office was closed or unreachable due to holiday, emergency, or disaster; (ii) the employee was hospitalized or medically incapacitated and unable to coordinate paperwork; (iii) the provider requested additional time in writing and the request is reasonable on its face - allow up to 5 additional business days (not exactly 3, to avoid arbitrary cutoffs). Document the specific reason and the extended deadline in case notes. For any other claimed circumstance, escalate to the Benefits Manager before granting an extension. If no certification and no qualifying reason are received by the extended deadline, escalate to the Benefits Manager - the Benefits Manager will decide whether to deny the leave.

#### Incomplete vs. insufficient - critical distinction:

- INCOMPLETE = blank fields or missing signatures. The LC can identify this objectively and request cure independently.
- INSUFFICIENT = filled in but vague or non-responsive. Determining insufficiency requires judgment about whether the information answers FMLA's questions. This requires escalation to Benefits Manager per Section 5.2.
- If the LC is uncertain whether a certification is incomplete or insufficient, treat it as insufficient and escalate. It is always safe to escalate and never safe to guess.

#### GINA reminder:

Medical certifications occasionally contain more information than requested, including family medical history that is protected under GINA. If any such extra information appears: do not read or retain it, redact the extra information from the stored copy, and escalate to General Counsel per Section 5.4. Do not discuss the extra information with the employee or any other party.

### **13.6 Continuous, Intermittent, and Reduced Schedule Leave**

FMLA leave can take three forms. The form determines how the leave is tracked and certified.

- Continuous leave: uninterrupted leave from the first day through the last day of the approved period. Example: employee takes 6 weeks off for surgery recovery. Simplest to administer.
- Intermittent leave: leave taken in separate blocks of time for the same qualifying reason. Example: employee takes FMLA one or two days at a time for migraine episodes, or half-day absences for physical therapy appointments. Requires tracking every absence individually.
- Reduced schedule leave: leave that reduces the employee's normal daily or weekly work schedule. Example: employee works 6 hours per day instead of 8 for 4 weeks during chemotherapy. Treated like intermittent leave for tracking purposes (2 hours of FMLA used per reduced day).

Tracking rules:

- Continuous: Log start date and expected end date in leave\_tracker.xlsx. Total hours used = regular workweek hours × number of workweeks on leave.
- Intermittent: Log each absence individually with date, hours used, and running rolling-12-month balance. Recalculate the balance at every use.
- Reduced schedule: Log each reduced-hour day with the "missed" hours (e.g., employee working 6 of 8 hours = 2 hours of FMLA used that day).

Intermittent leave requires medical certification that specifies the expected frequency and duration. Example: "2 to 3 episodes per month, lasting 1 to 2 days each." The certification frequency becomes the baseline for pattern checks.

#### **Pattern check:**

At the 30-day review required by Section 11, compare actual usage to certified frequency. If actual usage exceeds certified frequency by more than 50% over any 30-day period, flag the case as a pattern concern and escalate to Benefits Manager per Section 5.2 and Section 22. Do not communicate the pattern concern to the employee or manager without Benefits Manager direction.

### **13.7 Tracking Leave Usage in leave\_tracker.xlsx**

Every FMLA case must be tracked in leave\_tracker.xlsx from intake through closure. The following fields must be populated and kept current:

- Case ID (generated at intake; format LC-YYYY-NNNN, where YYYY is the calendar year and NNNN is any 4-digit number). Ensure that the Case ID is not already in use.
- Employee ID.
- Leave Type(s) - list all applicable (e.g., "FMLA + FMLI").

- Start Date (requested or actual leave start).
- Expected End Date (leave blank if unknown or uncertain).
- Actual End Date (blank until closure).
- Leave Form - Continuous / Intermittent / Reduced Schedule.
- Hours Used To Date.
- Rolling 12-Month Balance (as of the most recent use).
- Cert Status - Not Required / Requested / Pending / Received-Complete / Received-Incomplete / Insufficient / Escalated (leave blank if not yet requested).
- Cert Due Date (leave blank if not yet requested).
- Manager Name.
- Manager Notified (Y/N) and Date.
- Priority (P1/P2/P3/P4).
- Case Status - Intake, Active - Pending Certification, Active – Approved, Active - Pending Extension, Closed - Denied, Closed - Returned, and Escalated - [title of person case is escalated to]
- Notes (running log of every action, dated).
- Foreseeable / Unforeseeable - whether the leave was foreseeable (30+ calendar days advance notice possible) or unforeseeable.
- Contact Preference - employee's preferred contact method during leave (work email, personal email, or phone).
- Supporting Documentation - any documents attached to or referenced in the leave request (e.g., medical notes, military orders, adoption papers).

#### Update rules:

- At intake: populate Case ID, Employee ID, Leave Type(s), Start Date, Leave Form (if known), Foreseeable / Unforeseeable, Manager Name, Priority, and Case Status (set to "Intake"). Also populate Expected End Date, Contact Preference, and Supporting Documentation if available from the request. Set Hours Used To Date = 0. Leave blank until applicable: Actual End Date (blank until closure), Rolling 12-Month Balance (blank until first leave usage), Cert Status and Cert Due Date (blank until certification is requested).
- At each intermittent absence: add a row to the Absence Log sub-tab with date and hours, and update Hours Used To Date and Rolling Balance fields in the main tab.
- At cert receipt: update Cert Status and append a Notes entry with the date received and the outcome (complete/incomplete/insufficient/escalated).
- At Designation Notice: update Case Status to Active - Approved and note the designation in Notes.
- At return or closure: populate Actual End Date, set Case Status to Closed, and complete the case closure checklist in Section 20.

### 13.8 Return to Work and Fitness-for-Duty Certification

Return-to-work procedures differ based on the type of leave and the type of condition.

Fitness-for-duty certification required when:

- The leave was continuous AND for the employee's own serious health condition AND Ridgeline specified the fitness-for-duty requirement in the Designation Notice (WH-382).

Fitness-for-duty certification NOT required when:

- The leave was for a family member's serious health condition.
- The leave was for bonding.
- The leave was intermittent for the employee's own condition (in most cases). Exception: if an intermittent leave case has been open and actively used for 30 or more calendar days without the employee's condition resolving, the Benefits Manager may elect to require a fitness-for-duty certification upon each return from an intermittent episode - escalate to the Benefits Manager if unsure whether this threshold applies.

Return-to-work procedure:

- Step 1. Five business days before the scheduled return, verify that fitness-for-duty certification (if required) has been received. If not received, send a reminder to the employee using Template 8.
- Step 2. Two business days before the scheduled return, notify the manager of the expected return date and any certified work restrictions using Template 12. Do NOT disclose medical reasons for the restrictions.
- Step 3. If the fitness-for-duty certification clears the employee with no restrictions: proceed to Step 5.
- Step 4. If the fitness-for-duty certification includes restrictions: ESCALATE IMMEDIATELY to the HR Director per Section 5.3. Restrictions trigger an ADA-like analysis that is outside the Leave Coordinator's authority. Do not communicate the restrictions to the manager until the HR Director has directed the response.
- Step 5. On the day of return, the manager confirms in #leave-intake that the employee has returned. The Leave Coordinator posts a return confirmation to #payroll-coordination per Section 17.
- Step 6. Complete the case closure checklist in Section 20 and set Case Status to Closed.

#### **Failure to return:**

If the employee does not return on the scheduled date and has not contacted the Leave Coordinator or their manager with a legitimate reason for extension: do NOT assume the employee has abandoned their job. Attempt to contact the employee once via the contact preference on file. If no response within 2 business days, ESCALATE to the HR Director per Section 5.3. Failure-to-return cases have specific legal handling requirements that are outside the Leave Coordinator's authority.

### **13.9 Denials and Escalations**

Most FMLA denials require approval above the Leave Coordinator. Only two narrow categories may be issued independently.

Denials the Leave Coordinator may issue independently (per Section 5.1):

- Ineligibility due to insufficient tenure (less than 12 months) - confirmed from employee\_roster.xlsx.
- Ineligibility due to insufficient hours (less than 1,250 in the preceding 12 months) - confirmed from hours\_worked\_log.xlsx for non-exempt employees only. For exempt employees without a timesheet, escalate even when the imputed hours appear below 1,250, because the imputation itself involves judgment.

Denials requiring Benefits Manager approval (per Section 5.2):

- Insufficient certification after cure window expires.
- Exhausted FMLA entitlement in the rolling 12-month period.
- Reason claimed does not appear to qualify (e.g., not a serious health condition).
- Second or third opinion situations.
- Any denial where the employee has expressed disagreement or requested reconsideration.
- Any denial of a request to extend beyond the 12-week cap (or 26-week cap for military caregiver leave).

Denials requiring General Counsel consultation (per Section 5.4):

- Any denial where the employee has mentioned an attorney, EEOC, CDLE, DOL, or lawsuit.
- Any denial where the employee has alleged retaliation or discrimination.
- Any denial connected to active litigation.

Denial procedure:

- Step 1. Confirm which authority level applies from the lists above.
- Step 2. For LC-level denials (tenure/hours ineligibility only): prepare the WH-381 with Part A marked "Not Eligible" and the specific failed criterion noted. Send via Template 3. CC Benefits Manager on the email.
- Step 3. For escalated denials: prepare a case summary in leave\_tracker.xlsx Notes (employee name, Employee ID, requested leave, reason, basis for denial, any relevant prior communications). Forward the email thread and case summary to the Benefits Manager via #benefits-team. WAIT for written approval before communicating with the employee.
- Step 4. Log denial in leave\_tracker.xlsx with Case Status = Denied and a Notes entry explaining the basis.
- Step 5. If the employee responds challenging the denial: DO NOT reply. Forward the response to the Benefits Manager and wait for direction. This applies even for LC-level denials - challenges to ineligibility denials sometimes reveal data errors in hours\_worked\_log.xlsx that the LC cannot independently resolve.

## 14. Colorado FAMLI Procedure

Colorado Family and Medical Leave Insurance (FAMLI) is the state paid-family-leave program administered by the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE). FAMLI and FMLA

are separate laws with separate eligibility rules, but they frequently apply to the same leave event. When both apply, concurrent designation is required.

## **14.1 Overview**

- FAML I provides up to 12 weeks of paid leave per benefit year for qualifying reasons. An additional 4 weeks (16 weeks total) are available for pregnancy or childbirth complications. The FAML I benefit year is the calendar year (January 1 through December 31). An employee may use up to 12 weeks (or 16 for pregnancy complications) within a single calendar year; unused FAML I entitlement does not carry over to the following year. This differs from FMLA, which uses a rolling 12-month period measured backward from the first day of each new use (Section 13.2).
- Wage replacement under FAML I is paid by CDLE, NOT by Ridgeline. The Leave Coordinator should never discuss wage replacement amounts with employees.
- FAML I claims are filed by the employee directly with CDLE. The Leave Coordinator does NOT file claims on the employee's behalf and should direct any filing questions to CDLE at [claims@famli.colorado.gov](mailto:claims@famli.colorado.gov).
- Ridgeline's role is coordination: responding to CDLE claim notices, providing required notices to employees, maintaining health insurance during leave, and designating concurrent FMLA when applicable.
- FAML I includes job-protection rights similar to FMLA for employees who have worked for their current employer for at least 180 days.
- Ridgeline maintains a dedicated FAML I employer inbox at [famli-employer@ridgelinegear.com](mailto:famli-employer@ridgelinegear.com). CDLE sends Employer Response notices to this inbox via email from [claims@famli.colorado.gov](mailto:claims@famli.colorado.gov). The Leave Coordinator monitors this inbox every business day.

## **14.2 FAML I Eligibility**

FAML I eligibility is substantially different from FMLA eligibility:

- The employee must have earned at least \$2,500 in wages in the base period (the first 4 of the last 5 completed calendar quarters before the claim).
- There is NO tenure requirement with Ridgeline specifically. FAML I counts wages from all Colorado employers in the base period.
- There is NO minimum-hours requirement.
- There is NO worksite-size requirement.

Implication: Many employees who are NOT eligible for FMLA (because of short tenure or insufficient hours) ARE eligible for FAML I. An employee who is not FMLA-eligible (because of short tenure or insufficient hours) may still be FAML I-eligible if they have earned \$2,500 in the base period.

## **14.3 Concurrent Designation with FMLA**

Core rule: When a leave event qualifies under BOTH FMLA and FAML I, the Leave Coordinator MUST designate the leave as both, concurrently. The two entitlements run together on the same days. The employee does NOT get 12 weeks of FMLA plus 12 weeks of FAML I separately.

Exceptions to concurrent designation:

- If the employee is eligible for only one of the two laws, only that one applies.
- If the qualifying reason is recognized under one law but not the other (e.g., FAMLI "safe leave" for domestic violence, which has no FMLA equivalent), only the applicable law applies.
- If the employee claims a family relationship recognized under FAMLI but not FMLA (e.g., sibling or grandparent), only FAMLI applies. See Section 23.

When in doubt about whether the reasons align, escalate to the Benefits Manager per Section 5.2.

#### 14.4 FAMLI Qualifying Reasons

FAMLI qualifying reasons overlap with FMLA but are broader in some areas:

- Employee's own serious health condition (same standard as FMLA).
- Family member's serious health condition - with a BROADER family definition than FMLA. FAMLI family includes spouse, domestic partner, child (any age), parent, sibling, grandparent, grandchild, and any individual in a family-like relationship with the employee.
- Bonding with a new child (birth, adoption, foster placement) - same as FMLA, within 12 months.
- Qualifying exigency for a family member's covered military service - same as FMLA.
- Safe leave - for domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking affecting the employee or a family member. This category is FAMLI-only; FMLA does not provide safe leave.

#### 14.5 Procedure When an Employee Files a FAMLI Claim

- **Step 1:** Employees file FAMLI claims directly with CDLE. The Leave Coordinator does NOT file on the employee's behalf and should not advise on how to file beyond directing the employee to contact CDLE at [claims@famli.colorado.gov](mailto:claims@famli.colorado.gov).
- **Step 2:** When CDLE processes a claim, it sends an Employer Response notice via email from [claims@famli.colorado.gov](mailto:claims@famli.colorado.gov) to Ridgeline's dedicated FAMLI employer inbox at [famli-employer@ridgelinegear.com](mailto:famli-employer@ridgelinegear.com). The Leave Coordinator monitors this inbox every business day at the start of the day.
- **Step 3:** When an Employer Response notice arrives, the Leave Coordinator has 5 BUSINESS days to respond per Section 11.
- **Step 4:** Open [famli\\_coordination\\_log.xlsx](#). Create a new row with Employee ID, FAMLI Claim ID, Claim Start Date, Claimed Reason Category, and (if applicable) Concurrent FMLA Case ID.
- **Step 5:** Verify the claim against any active FMLA case for the same employee. If the FAMLI claim reasons match an active FMLA case, link the two cases. If the reasons diverge (e.g., the FAMLI claim is for a sibling but no FMLA case is open), escalate to the Benefits Manager per Section 5.2 - the divergence may indicate a FAMLI-only case or a data error.
- **Step 6:** If no FMLA case is open but the employee IS FMLA-eligible AND the FAMLI reason would also qualify under FMLA, OPEN a concurrent FMLA case immediately and begin the FMLA designation procedure in Section 23. Concurrent designation is required

- failing to open an FMLA case here means the employee would accumulate FAMLI usage without FMLA usage, giving them more total leave than the law intends.

- **Step 7:** Submit the Employer Response by replying to the original CDLE email at [claims@famli.colorado.gov](mailto:claims@famli.colorado.gov). Include in the reply: employee name and Ridgeline Employee ID, FAMLI Claim ID from the original notice, confirmation of employment, confirmation of leave dates, and confirmation of whether FMLA is running concurrently (with concurrent Case ID if applicable).
- **Step 8:** Send Template 18 to the employee confirming the concurrent designation and directing all wage-replacement questions to CDLE.
- **Step 9:** Send Template 11 to the employee's manager notifying them of the leave start date, leave type ("approved leave" unless disclosure is operationally required per Section 16.1), and expected return date.
- **Step 10:** Post to #leave-intake: FAMLI INTAKE: [Case ID], [Concurrent FMLA: Y/N], [Start Date].
- **Step 11:** Post to #payroll-coordination to notify the Payroll Lead of the FAMLI start date per Section 17.

#### 14.6 FAMLI-Only Cases (Not FMLA-Eligible)

An employee may be eligible for FAMLI but not FMLA. In this case the Leave Coordinator still administers and tracks the leave, but only under FAMLI rules:

- Open a Case ID in [leave\\_tracker.xlsx](#) with Leave Type = "FAMLI" (not "FMLA + FAMLI").
- Set initial Case Status = "Intake".
- Reply to the employee using Template 31, acknowledging the leave request and directing them to file directly with CDLE at [claims@famli.colorado.gov](mailto:claims@famli.colorado.gov).
- Track in [famli\\_coordination\\_log.xlsx](#) per Section 14.5.
- Do NOT send FMLA notices (WH-381 or WH-382) for a FAMLI-only case.
- Job restoration questions for FAMLI-only cases must be escalated to the Benefits Manager - FAMLI has its own 180-day employment threshold for job restoration that differs from FMLA's rules.

#### 14.7 Wage Replacement and Health Insurance

- Ridgeline does NOT pay wage replacement during FAMLI. The CDLE pays the employee directly from the FAMLI fund.
- Leave Coordinator must NEVER discuss wage replacement amounts or calculations with the employee. All such questions are directed to CDLE directly at [claims@famli.colorado.gov](mailto:claims@famli.colorado.gov) or, if the employee insists on speaking with someone at Ridgeline, to the Benefits Manager.
- Health insurance continuation: Ridgeline must maintain the employee's health insurance during FAMLI leave on the same terms as if the employee were actively working. Premium collection during leave is handled by the Payroll Lead - notify Payroll via #payroll-coordination at leave start.
- PTO supplementation: Colorado law allows employees to supplement FAMLI wage replacement with accrued PTO up to 100% of their regular wages. The Leave Coordinator does NOT calculate or administer this - route all PTO supplementation questions to the Payroll Lead per Section 17.

## 15. ADA Accommodation Intake Procedure

The Leave Coordinator handles ADA accommodation requests on an INTAKE-ONLY basis. All accommodation decisions, including whether to grant, deny, or propose alternatives, are made by the HR Director through the interactive process. The Leave Coordinator's role is strictly to recognize an ADA request, acknowledge it, route it, and track it.

### 15.1 Recognizing an ADA Request

ADA accommodation requests rarely arrive with the words "ADA accommodation" on them. The Leave Coordinator must recognize an accommodation request in any of the following forms:

- "I need a reasonable accommodation for [X]."
- "Because of my disability, I need [X]."
- "My doctor says I need [X] at work."
- "I'm having trouble doing [essential function] because of my [medical condition]."
- "Can I work from home because of [medical condition]?"
- "I need a different chair / schedule / assignment because of [condition]."
- An employee returning from FMLA/FAMLI who asks for work restrictions or a modified schedule.
- Any indirect mention of a physical or mental limitation affecting job performance.

**Rule: When in doubt, treat it as an ADA request and route it. It is always better to over-intake than to miss an accommodation request. Missing an ADA request exposes Ridgeline to significant legal risk.**

### 15.2 Intake Procedure

- **Step 1:** Same-business-day acknowledgment. Reply to the employee using Template 19. The acknowledgment confirms receipt, tells the employee the HR Director will be in contact to discuss the request, and provides no information about whether the accommodation will be granted.
- **Step 2:** Same-business-day routing. Forward the original email thread to Daniel Whitfield (d.whitfield@ridgelinegear.com) with subject line "ADA ACCOMMODATION REQUEST - [Employee Name]".
- **Step 3:** Post to #hr-escalations using format: ADA REQUEST: [Case ID], [Date Received] - routed to HR Director.
- **Step 4:** Open leave\_tracker.xlsx. Create a case with Leave Type = "ADA Accommodation" (even though it is not technically leave), Case Status = "Intake - Routed to HR Director", and Priority per Section 14.
- **Step 5:** Store any medical information included in the request in [Employee\_ID]/ with restricted access. Do NOT store medical information in the general case file.
- **Step 6:** Update leave\_tracker.xlsx case notes only as directed by the HR Director. The LC does not independently progress an ADA case after intake.

### 15.3 Actions the Leave Coordinator Must NEVER Take on an ADA Case

- **NEVER** tell the employee their accommodation is granted or denied.
- **NEVER** tell the employee what accommodations are available or might be offered.

- **NEVER** ask the employee what their disability is.
- **NEVER** request medical documentation from the employee or a provider. Medical documentation in the interactive process is requested by the HR Director if needed.
- **NEVER** communicate with the manager about the accommodation request unless specifically directed by the HR Director.
- **NEVER** place ADA-related documentation in the employee's general personnel file. All ADA documentation lives in .
- **NEVER** speculate with the employee about timelines, outcomes, or what the HR Director "probably" will decide.

## 15.4 Interaction Between ADA and FMLA/FAMLI

An employee may simultaneously have an FMLA/FAMLI leave request and an ADA accommodation request. Common scenarios:

- An employee recovering from surgery requests FMLA leave for the recovery period AND asks for modified duty upon return.
- An employee on intermittent FMLA for a chronic condition asks for a workspace modification related to the same condition.
- An employee requests FMLA leave, and in the same email mentions long-term accommodations they will need when they return.

Handling these cases:

- The LC handles the FMLA/FAMLI side under Sections 13 and 14.
- The LC routes the ADA side to the HR Director under Section 15.
- Track both in the same Case ID in leave\_tracker.xlsx, with both Leave Types listed (e.g., "FMLA + FAMLI + ADA Accommodation").
- Keep FMLA medical certification (WH-380-E/F) and any ADA medical documentation in SEPARATE files within [Employee\_ID]/. The FMLA cert and the ADA documentation should never be combined into one document, even if they come from the same provider.
- If the employee asks about both in one email, the consolidated acknowledgment per Section 14 must cover both topics without merging them. The FMLA/FAMLI acknowledgment uses Section 26 templates; the ADA acknowledgment uses Template 19.

## 16. Working With Managers

Managers are frequent sources of error in leave administration because they often want information they are not entitled to, and they often do not know what they can and cannot ask of an employee on protected leave. This section defines the limits and procedures for manager interaction.

### 16.1 What a Manager May and May Not Know

A manager needs enough information to administer their team's work during an employee's leave, but NOT medical details. The boundary is strict and non-negotiable.

A manager MAY be told:

- That the employee is on approved leave (without specifying the type or reason).
- The expected start date of the leave.
- The expected return date.
- Whether the leave is continuous, intermittent, or reduced schedule.
- For intermittent leave, the general frequency (e.g., "up to 3 days per month" or "up to 2 hours per week") - but NOT the verbatim certified frequency.
- Any work restrictions upon return, as stated on the fitness-for-duty certification - but NOT the medical reason for the restrictions.

A manager MAY NOT be told:

- The specific medical condition, diagnosis, or treatment.
- Any family member's medical information.
- Any information the employee has not explicitly consented to share.
- Anything from the WH-380-E, WH-380-F, or fitness-for-duty certification that is not a work restriction.
- The name or identity of any family member involved in a family-care leave.
- Whether the leave is FMLA, FAMILI, ADA, or workers' compensation - unless there is a specific operational reason the manager needs to know (in which case, state only the leave type, not the reason).

## **16.2 Standard Manager Notification**

When the Leave Coordinator issues the FMLA Designation Notice (or equivalent FAMILI designation), the LC simultaneously sends a standardized Manager Leave Notification to the employee's manager.

The Template 11 includes ONLY:

- Employee name.
- Leave general category - "approved leave" is the default. Disclose the specific leave type (e.g., "FMLA leave" or "FAMILI leave") only when operationally necessary, meaning: (a) the manager needs to know the legal leave type to comply with a specific legal obligation (e.g., intermittent FMLA cannot be counted in an attendance program), or (b) the Benefits Manager has specifically directed disclosure for the case. When in doubt, use "approved leave." Never include the medical reason regardless of which category is disclosed.
- Start date.
- Expected end date.
- Continuous, intermittent, or reduced schedule status. For intermittent, provide a general frequency range only.
- Any work restrictions upon return (if known).
- Instruction to direct all operational questions about the leave to the Leave Coordinator, not to the employee.

**The Manager Leave Notification must NEVER include the reason category, medical details, or any information from the medical certification beyond work restrictions.**

### **10.3 Manager-Initiated Questions About an Employee's Leave**

- **Step 1:** Verify the requesting manager is the employee's manager of record per employee\_roster.xlsx. Managers may inquire only about their own direct reports.
- **Step 2:** Identify what the manager is asking. Determine which information they are entitled to under Section 16.
- **Step 3:** If the request is within the manager's entitlement: respond using Template 13 with ONLY the information they may have.
- **Step 4:** If the request exceeds the manager's entitlement: decline politely using Template 14, which explains that medical details are confidential and directs the manager to contact the Leave Coordinator for operational needs.
- **Step 5:** If the manager persists, becomes demanding, or expresses dissatisfaction with the limits: escalate to the HR Director per Section 5.3. Do not attempt to mediate or persuade the manager directly.
- **Step 6:** Document every manager request in the case notes, including the request, the response, and any escalation.

### **16.4 Manager Reports of Suspected Leave Abuse**

Managers sometimes report concerns about their employee's leave usage. Examples of such reports:

- "Employee has called in sick every Friday for the past month."
- "Employee's intermittent FMLA absences always fall on the day after a major holiday."
- "Employee is using intermittent leave more often than the doctor's note said."
- "Employee was seen at a sporting event on a day they were out on FMLA."

Procedure:

- **Step 1:** Thank the manager for the information and tell them the LC will review the case. Do NOT agree or disagree with the manager's assessment.
- **Step 2:** Document the manager's report verbatim in leave\_tracker.xlsx case notes with date and manager name.
- **Step 3:** Open the case and review the certified frequency (for intermittent leave) against the Absence Log.
- **Step 4:** If actual usage exceeds certified frequency by more than 50% over any 30-day period, or if the pattern suggests potential fraud, escalate to the Benefits Manager per Section 5.2 and Section 22.
- **Step 5:** If the usage is within the certified frequency, respond to the manager using Template 15, which states generally that the absences are within approved limits. Do NOT disclose the certified frequency verbatim; the frequency is medical-related information.
- **Step 6:** If the manager indicates they intend to discipline the employee for the protected absences (e.g., "I'm going to write her up for excessive absenteeism"): IMMEDIATELY escalate to the HR Director per Section 5.3. Disciplining an employee for FMLA-

protected absences is a textbook interference claim. Do not attempt to educate the manager yourself.

## **16.5 Manager Coordination During Active Leave**

During continuous leave:

- Work-related communication between manager and employee should go through the Leave Coordinator except in cases of genuine operational emergency.
- The manager may NOT contact the employee to discuss work assignments, return dates, performance issues, or operational matters without informing the Leave Coordinator.
- If an operational question arises that only the employee can answer (e.g., location of a client file), the Leave Coordinator may facilitate a one-time communication but should never require the employee to respond.

During intermittent leave:

- The employee calls in per Ridgeline's normal call-in procedures and designates the absence as FMLA-covered.
- The manager logs the absence in the attendance system and notifies the Leave Coordinator via email or #leave-intake.
- The Leave Coordinator updates leave\_tracker.xlsx with the absence hours and recalculates the rolling balance.
- The manager may ask the employee why they are using leave on a specific day ONLY to confirm the absence is for the certified reason - and the employee need only confirm yes or no. The manager may not demand medical details.

## **16.6 Return-to-Work Coordination**

- Five business days before the scheduled return date, the LC verifies that fitness-for-duty certification has been received (if required for the case).
- Two business days before the scheduled return date, the LC notifies the manager of the expected return and any work restrictions using Template 12.
- On the day of return, the manager confirms in #leave-intake that the employee has returned for their scheduled shift.
- The LC closes the case per the case closure checklist in Section 20.
- If the employee does not return on the scheduled date, follow the failure-to-return procedure in Section 23.

## **17. Benefits & Payroll Handoff**

Benefits continuation, premium billing, wage replacement calculations, tax withholding, 401(k) administration, and PTO supplementation are outside the Leave Coordinator's authority. The Leave Coordinator's role in these areas is strictly notification and handoff. Answering any of these questions yourself - even if you believe you know the answer - is a violation of Section 5.5.

### **17.1 Events That Trigger Payroll Notification**

The Leave Coordinator must notify the Payroll Lead (Teresa Vang) via #payroll-coordination for every one of the following events:

- Leave start - the first day of any approved continuous leave, or the first intermittent-leave absence in a newly opened case.
- Transition to unpaid status - e.g., when paid PTO supplementation ends and the employee transitions to unpaid FMLA.
- Scheduled return from continuous leave.
- Actual return from leave (confirmation from the manager).
- Each intermittent-leave absence that reduces the employee's scheduled paid hours.
- Case closure.
- Any retroactive designation that affects pay periods already processed (also escalate to Benefits Manager per Section 5.2).

## **17.2 Payroll Notification Format**

Post to #payroll-coordination using the standard format:

LEAVE PAYROLL NOTIFICATION: [Case ID], [Event Type], [Effective Date], [Continuous/Intermittent], [Notes]

Example:

LEAVE PAYROLL NOTIFICATION: [Case ID], [Event Type], [Effective Date], [Continuous/Intermittent], [Notes].

*Do not include medical details, diagnoses, or the reason category in the payroll notification. "FMLA + FAML I concurrent" is the maximum level of detail; never "FMLA for surgery" or "FAML I for birth of child."*

## **17.3 Employee Payroll Questions - Handoff Required**

When an employee asks the Leave Coordinator any of the following types of questions, the LC does NOT answer. The LC responds using Template 16 and forwards the question to the Payroll Lead:

- "Will I still get paid during my leave?"
- "Can I use PTO to supplement my FAML I payments?"
- "What happens to my health insurance premiums while I'm on leave?"
- "Will my 401(k) contributions continue?"
- "Is my FAML I wage replacement taxed?"
- "How much will my FAML I wage replacement be?"
- "Will my PTO still accrue while I'm on leave?"
- "How does this affect my paycheck?"
- Any question involving a dollar amount, percentage, rate, or tax calculation.
- Any question about pay stub contents.
- Any question about the timing of pay during leave.

**The Template 16 explicitly tells the employee that the Leave Coordinator has forwarded the question to Teresa Vang, who will respond directly. The LC does NOT provide any partial answer, estimate, or "I think it works like" statement before the handoff.**

## **17.4 Benefits Continuation - Handoff Rules**

During any unpaid leave (unpaid FMLA, FAMILI regardless of wage replacement, personal unpaid leave), the following actions are handled by other roles, NOT the Leave Coordinator:

- Health insurance premium billing and collection during unpaid leave - Payroll Lead (Teresa Vang).
- Health insurance continuation eligibility and rules - Benefits Manager (Renata Okafor).
- 401(k) contribution suspension and resumption - Payroll Lead.
- HSA and FSA contribution rules during leave - Benefits Manager.
- PTO and sick leave accrual during leave - Payroll Lead.
- COBRA notification if a leave converts to separation - Benefits Manager.

The LC's only role in benefits continuation is to notify the Payroll Lead promptly of the start and end of any unpaid period, so that Payroll can manage premium billing and any paycheck adjustments. The LC does not discuss these topics with the employee under any circumstances.

## **17.5 Manager Questions About Payroll Impact**

Managers sometimes ask how an employee's leave affects payroll. Examples:

- "Does this absence count against their PTO?"
- "Are they still getting paid this week?"
- "How do I code this on the timesheet?"

Respond using Template 17, which tells the manager the LC has forwarded their question to Teresa Vang. Do not answer the question directly, even if the answer seems obvious. Payroll coding and paycheck impacts are Teresa's responsibility, not the LC's.

## **18. Colorado HFWA & Other Paid Leave**

This section covers the paid and unpaid leave types not addressed in Sections 13–15: Colorado HFWA sick leave, company PTO, bereavement leave, jury duty leave, USERRA military leave, and personal unpaid leave. Most of these are simpler than FMLA/FAMILI, but each has specific intake rules and several contain traps for a junior employee who treats them as routine.

### **18.1 Colorado HFWA Sick Leave**

The Colorado Healthy Families and Workplaces Act (HFWA) requires Ridgeline to provide paid sick leave to all employees.

- All employees accrue from their first day of employment - no waiting period.
- Accrual rate: 1 hour of HFWA sick leave per 30 hours worked.
- Annual cap: 48 hours accrued per calendar year.

- Balance cap: 48 hours maximum carryover at calendar year-end. Note: the annual accrual cap (48 hours) and the balance cap (48 hours) are numerically identical but operate differently. The accrual cap limits how many hours an employee can earn in a given calendar year; the balance cap limits how many unused hours can carry over into the following year. An employee whose balance reaches 48 hours mid-year stops accruing until they use some leave, at which point accrual resumes until the annual cap is reached again.
- Paid at the employee's regular rate of pay.
- No advance notice required for unforeseeable use. For foreseeable use, reasonable notice is expected but cannot be required as a condition of use.
- Documentation may be required only when the absence is 4 or more consecutive workdays.

#### Qualifying reasons for HFWA sick leave:

- Employee's own illness, injury, or health condition, including preventive care.
- A family member's illness, injury, or health condition, including preventive care (HFWA uses the broader Colorado family definition, not the narrower FMLA definition).
- Public health emergency declared by a federal, state, or local authority that causes closure of the employee's workplace or the employee's child's school or care provider.
- Safe leave: needs related to domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking affecting the employee or a family member.

#### Procedure for HFWA sick leave requests and inquiries:

- **Step 1:** Verify the sender via triage per Section 14.
- **Step 2:** Determine whether the request is (a) a balance inquiry, (b) a notification of HFWA use, or (c) a request to apply HFWA retroactively to an absence already taken.
- **Step 3:** For balance inquiries: open `hfw_balance_tracker.xlsx`, locate the employee, and respond with current YTD Accrued, YTD Used, and Current Balance using Template 20. Priority P4.
- **Step 4:** For use notifications: verify the reason falls within a qualifying category. If the reason is vague or not clearly qualifying, ask the employee only for a reason category (per Section 9, do not ask for medical details).
- **Step 5:** Reclassification check: if the reason described is for a condition that could qualify as an FMLA "serious health condition" (e.g., hospitalization, continuing treatment, condition lasting more than 3 consecutive days with ongoing treatment), the Leave Coordinator must open a concurrent FMLA/FAMLI intake per Section 6 - even if the employee only asked about HFWA. HFWA is not a substitute for FMLA and cannot be used to avoid FMLA designation.
- **Step 6:** If the absence is 4 or more consecutive workdays, send Template 21 asking for documentation. Do not require documentation for shorter absences.
- **Step 7:** Log the HFWA use in `hfw_balance_tracker.xlsx`: increment YTD Used by the hours used and recalculate Current Balance. Update `leave_tracker.xlsx` with a Case ID only if the absence is 2 or more consecutive days, or if concurrent FMLA/FAMLI applies. Note: opening a Case ID for a 2- or 3-day absence does NOT trigger a documentation request - documentation may be requested only when the absence reaches 4 or more

consecutive workdays (Step 6). The Case ID at the 2-day threshold is for tracking purposes only.

- **Step 8:** Post to #leave-intake only if the absence is 2 or more consecutive days or involves concurrent FMLA/FAMLI. Do not post individual single-day HFWA absences to Slack. Note: single-day HFWA absences must still be recorded in hfwa\_balance\_tracker.xlsx (Step 7) even though they do not generate a Slack post or a leave\_tracker.xlsx Case ID. If an employee uses 3 or more single-day HFWA absences within a single calendar month, note the pattern in hfwa\_balance\_tracker.xlsx and flag for the 30-day intermittent case review per Section 22 to assess whether an FMLA/FAMLI intake is warranted.
- **Step 9:** Notify the manager via Template 11 if the absence affects scheduled work. Include dates only - never the reason category.

### **HFWA classification disputes:**

If the employee and Leave Coordinator disagree about whether HFWA applies to an absence (e.g., employee claims HFWA for a reason that does not appear to qualify), this is an HFWA classification dispute and must be escalated to the Benefits Manager per Section 5.2. Do not deny HFWA use independently.

## **18.2 Company PTO**

The Leave Coordinator handles company PTO only when it intersects with another leave case. PTO balance inquiries, PTO request approvals, and PTO-only absence questions are NOT the Leave Coordinator's responsibility and must be routed elsewhere.

What the Leave Coordinator DOES handle:

- Requests to substitute PTO for unpaid FMLA or FAMLI (e.g., employee wants to use accrued PTO during the unpaid portion of their leave).
- Coordination with Payroll Lead when PTO substitution starts or ends during an active leave case.
- Noting in leave\_tracker.xlsx that PTO substitution is active for a given case.

What the Leave Coordinator does NOT handle:

- PTO balance inquiries - direct to Payroll Lead via Template 16.
- PTO request approvals (non-leave) - direct to the employee's manager.
- Calculation of PTO accrual rates or balance caps.
- PTO payout on separation.

Procedure for PTO substitution during an active leave case:

- **Step 1:** Confirm from the employee that they wish to substitute accrued PTO during the unpaid portion of their leave.
- **Step 2:** Note the substitution request in leave\_tracker.xlsx case notes.
- **Step 3:** Post to #payroll-coordination: PTO SUBSTITUTION: [Case ID], [Start Date], [End Date or "until balance exhausted"]. Teresa Vang handles the actual balance calculation and pay coding.

- **Step 4:** Respond to the employee using Template 22, confirming the substitution has been communicated to Payroll and directing all balance and pay questions to Payroll Lead.
- **Step 5:** Do NOT tell the employee how much PTO they have, how many weeks the substitution will last, or how PTO interacts with FMLI wage replacement. These are Payroll questions.

### 18.3 Bereavement Leave

Ridgeline offers paid bereavement leave for the death of a family member:

- 3 days (24 hours for a full-time employee) for immediate family: spouse, domestic partner, parent, child, or sibling.
- 1 day (8 hours for a full-time employee) for extended family: grandparent, grandchild, in-laws (parent, child, or sibling of spouse), aunt, uncle, niece, or nephew.
- Paid at the employee's regular rate.
- Documentation (obituary, death certificate, or funeral program) required within 30 calendar days.
- Can be taken at the time of the loss or at a later memorial/service date within 30 days of the death.

Priority: Immediate family bereavement is P1. Extended family bereavement is P2.

Procedure:

- **Step 1:** Same-business-day acknowledgment using Template 23. Express condolences briefly and professionally.
- **Step 2:** Verify the stated family relationship against the immediate/extended family lists above. There are three possible outcomes:
  - **Step 2a:** Relationship is on the immediate or extended family list: proceed to Step 3.
  - **Step 2b:** Relationship is ambiguous (e.g., step-parent, step-sibling, half-sibling, child's spouse, spouse's grandparent, long-term unmarried partner, chosen family, in-law not explicitly listed in the policy): escalate to the Benefits Manager before approving - do not make the relationship determination independently. Wait for the Benefits Manager's written decision before proceeding.
  - **Step 2c:** Relationship is clearly outside both lists (e.g., friend, neighbor, cousin, professional colleague, distant relative not on either list): bereavement leave does not apply under Ridgeline policy. Send Template 30 (Bereavement Not Covered) to the employee, which explains the policy boundary and offers PTO or personal unpaid leave (Section 18) as alternatives. Do NOT open a bereavement case in leave\_tracker.xlsx and do NOT escalate to the Benefits Manager - this is a clear policy boundary the LC may communicate directly. If the employee subsequently requests PTO or personal unpaid leave, open a new case under the appropriate type.
- **Step 3:** Open leave\_tracker.xlsx: Case ID, Leave Type = Bereavement, Start Date, Expected End Date (Start Date + 3 days for immediate or + 1 day for extended).
- **Step 4:** Notify the manager using Template 11 (dates only - do NOT include the name of the deceased unless the employee has specifically asked that you share it).
- **Step 5:** Post to #payroll-coordination with the standard leave notification format.

- **Step 6:** Add a calendar event for the documentation deadline: 30 calendar days from the date of loss, in the HR Leave Deadlines Google Calendar.
- **Step 7:** Upon receipt of documentation: file in the employee's non-medical HR file with filename bereavement\_[Case ID]\_[Date].pdf. Note: bereavement documentation is NOT medical information and should NOT be filed in .
- **Step 8:** If documentation is not received within 30 calendar days: reclassify the leave as PTO. Update leave\_tracker.xlsx to reflect the reclassification, notify Payroll Lead via #payroll-coordination to adjust coding, and send Template 24 to the employee.

Extended bereavement requests:

If the employee requests more than the policy allowance (e.g., 5 days for immediate family instead of 3), escalate to the Benefits Manager. Options typically include PTO supplementation or unpaid leave. Do not approve extensions independently.

## 18.4 Jury Duty Leave

Colorado law and Ridgeline policy both protect jury duty leave:

- All employees are eligible from day 1.
- Paid at regular wages, minus any jury compensation received from the court. Payroll handles this calculation; the Leave Coordinator does not.
- No maximum duration - the employee is covered for the full length of jury service.
- Summons documentation must be provided to HR within 2 business days of the employee's receipt of the summons (Section 11 Deadline Matrix).
- Employees must return to work during any day or portion of a day when they are not required at court, unless the employee is excused in writing by the court or the supervisor.

Procedure:

- **Step 1:** Receive the jury summons from the employee (typically forwarded via email as a PDF scan or photo).
- **Step 2:** Verify the summons appears legitimate: check that it names a specific court, includes a case or juror number, and states a specific reporting date.
- **Step 3:** Open leave\_tracker.xlsx: Case ID, Leave Type = Jury Duty, Start Date (from summons), Expected End Date (initially set to Start Date + 1 day; update when actual duration is known).
- **Step 4:** Notify the manager using Template 11.
- **Step 5:** Post to #payroll-coordination with the standard leave notification format so Teresa Vang can code jury duty correctly on the timesheet.
- **Step 6:** File the summons in the employee's non-medical HR file with filename jury\_summons\_[Case ID]\_[Date].pdf. Do NOT file in - a jury summons is not medical information.
- **Step 7:** When jury duty ends, update leave\_tracker.xlsx with Actual End Date. Notify the manager and Payroll Lead of the return date.
- **Step 8:** If the jury compensation check is sent to Ridgeline (some courts do this): forward the check to Teresa Vang for processing per Ridgeline policy. The Leave Coordinator does not endorse, cash, or retain jury checks.

Extended jury duty (more than 5 consecutive business days) should be flagged to the Benefits Manager. Extended jury service is rare and may involve special scheduling or pay questions.

### **18.5 USERRA and Military Leave - Intake Only**

USERRA (Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act) is a federal law protecting the employment of military servicemembers. USERRA cases are COMPLEX and HIGH-STAKES. The Leave Coordinator's role is intake only - all substantive handling is done by the Benefits Manager.

Procedure:

- **Step 1:** Same-business-day acknowledgment using Template 25. The acknowledgment confirms receipt and tells the employee the Benefits Manager will be in contact.
- **Step 2:** Open leave\_tracker.xlsx: Case ID, Leave Type = USERRA, Case Status = Intake - Routed to Benefits Manager.
- **Step 3:** Request military orders from the employee if not already provided. Military orders are non-medical documents but should still be filed in the employee's non-medical HR file.
- **Step 4:** Forward the email thread and any orders to the Benefits Manager (Renata Okafor) immediately with subject line "USERRA REQUEST - [Employee Name]".
- **Step 5:** Post to #hr-escalations: USERRA REQUEST: [Case ID], [Start Date], [Duration if known] - routed to Benefits Manager.
- **Step 6:** Do NOT advise the employee on USERRA rights, pay continuation, benefits continuation, reemployment rights, or escalation of rank upon return. All such discussions are the Benefits Manager's responsibility.
- **Step 7:** Update leave\_tracker.xlsx case notes only as directed by the Benefits Manager.

#### **Limited exception:**

The Leave Coordinator may receive and log a short, routine military absence (such as a single weekend of National Guard drill, under 3 days) without escalating to the Benefits Manager, provided the employee has provided either formal military orders or an official unit training assembly schedule or drill schedule (which serves in place of orders for recurring National Guard or Reserve obligations), and there is no pay or benefits question. Any military leave exceeding 3 days, any activation for extended duty, any reservist call-up, and any case where the employee asks any question about pay, benefits, or reemployment MUST be escalated.

### **18.6 Personal Unpaid Leave**

Personal unpaid leave is a discretionary benefit under Ridgeline Handbook §4.8. It is NOT an entitlement. The Leave Coordinator's role is intake and routing; approval requires both the employee's manager and the HR Director.

Policy parameters:

- Up to 30 calendar days maximum.
- Unpaid.
- Discretionary - may be denied for any legitimate business reason.

- Requires BOTH manager and HR Director approval.
- Health benefits continue only if the employee pays the full premium during the leave period (including the portion normally paid by Ridgeline).
- Extensions beyond 30 days are rare and require HR Director approval.

Procedure:

- **Step 1:** Pre-intake FMLA check. Before treating a request as personal leave, ask the employee (using the reason category framework only) whether the request might qualify for FMLA. Examples: an employee requesting "personal leave for surgery" should be handled as FMLA, not personal leave. An employee requesting "personal leave to care for a sick parent" should be handled as FMLA. Only process as personal leave if the reason is clearly outside FMLA/FAMLI qualifying categories.
- **Step 2:** Same-business-day acknowledgment using Template 26. The acknowledgment explicitly states that personal leave is discretionary and approval is not guaranteed.
- **Step 3:** Open leave\_tracker.xlsx: Case ID, Leave Type = Personal Unpaid, Case Status = Pending Approval.
- **Step 4:** Forward the request to the employee's manager AND the HR Director simultaneously using Template 27. Both approvals are required.
- **Step 5:** Post to #hr-escalations: PERSONAL LEAVE REQUEST: [Case ID], [Dates], [Stated Reason Category] - routed for approval.
- **Step 6:** Do NOT communicate with the employee about the outcome until both approvals are received. Do NOT speculate about whether the request will be approved.
- **Step 7:** Upon both approvals: respond using Template 28. Notify Payroll Lead via #payroll-coordination. Add return date to HR Leave Deadlines calendar. Inform the employee in writing that health benefits will continue only if they pay the full premium, and route all premium questions to Payroll Lead.
- **Step 8:** Upon denial by either approver: respond using Template 29. Close the case in leave\_tracker.xlsx with Case Status = Denied. Do not disclose which approver denied the request.

## 19. Intermittent Leave Tracking

Intermittent leave is the most administratively demanding type of leave because every absence must be logged individually, running balances must be recalculated at each use, and patterns must be monitored for consistency with the medical certification.

### 19.1 Absence Intake

Intermittent absences are reported to the Leave Coordinator in one of two ways: by the employee directly (via email or phone to their manager, who then notifies the LC) or by the manager (reporting an attendance event). Either way, the LC is responsible for logging the absence within 1 business day of notification.

- **Step 1:** Verify the absence is against an active intermittent leave case in leave\_tracker.xlsx. If no active case exists, do NOT log the absence as FMLA - instead, treat as a new intake per Section 14.

- **Step 2:** Confirm the absence reason matches the certified qualifying reason for the active case. The employee need only confirm yes or no - the LC does not ask for details.
- **Step 3:** Record the absence in leave\_tracker.xlsx Absence Log sub-tab with the following fields: Date, Hours Used, Case ID, Reported By (employee or manager name), Notes (any relevant context, never medical).
- **Step 4:** If the absence is a partial day (e.g., 2 hours for a physical therapy appointment), log the partial hours. Do not round up to a full day.
- **Step 5:** Recalculate the Hours Used To Date and Rolling 12-Month Balance fields in the main case record per Section 23.
- **Step 6:** No Slack post is required for routine intermittent absences. Exception: if the absence pushes the employee's rolling balance below 20% remaining, post an early-exhaustion warning to #benefits-team.

## 19.2 30-Day Case Review

Every active intermittent case must be reviewed at least once every 30 calendar days, per Section 11 Deadline Matrix. The review is not triggered by any specific event - it is a recurring obligation managed through the HR Leave Deadlines Google Calendar.

- **Step 1:** At case opening, add a recurring calendar event: "Intermittent Case Review - [Case ID]" set to repeat every 30 calendar days until case closure.
- **Step 2:** At each review, compare actual absence frequency (from the Absence Log) against the certified frequency (from the medical certification notes in the case record).
- **Step 3:** Calculate usage variance:  $(\text{actual 30-day usage} - \text{certified 30-day frequency}) \div \text{certified 30-day frequency}$ . Express as a percentage.
- **Step 4:** If variance is within  $\pm 50\%$  of certified frequency: the case is within expected parameters. Document "30-day review complete, within parameters" in case notes and proceed.
- **Step 5:** If variance exceeds  $+50\%$  (actual usage is more than  $150\%$  of certified): flag as a pattern concern per Section 22. Escalate to Benefits Manager.
- **Step 6:** If variance exceeds  $-50\%$  (actual usage is less than  $50\%$  of certified): this is typically not a concern but should still be documented. The employee may have improved or may simply not be using the available leave.
- **Step 7:** Check whether any new absences correspond to certified frequency but cluster around suspicious dates (Mondays, Fridays, days before/after holidays). Do not act on clusters independently - flag to Benefits Manager per Section 22 if a cluster pattern appears.

## 19.3 Certification Refresh

- If a case has been open for more than 6 months, request an updated medical certification using Template 7.
- If the original certification has an expiration date, request renewal 30 days before expiration. Add the expiration date as an event in the HR Leave Deadlines calendar when the original certification is filed.

- If the Benefits Manager authorizes a re-certification at any time (because of a pattern concern or other circumstance), follow the Benefits Manager's specific instructions.
- Do not request recertification independently based on your own suspicion of a pattern - all recertification decisions are authorized by the Benefits Manager.

#### **19.4 Pattern Flag Triggers Specific to Intermittent Leave**

- Actual usage exceeds certified frequency by more than 50% in any 30-day period.
- Absences cluster on specific days (e.g., always Mondays or always Fridays) when the certified condition does not suggest such a pattern.
- Absences cluster around holidays, paid time off periods, or the day after payday.
- A manager reports observing the employee engaged in activity inconsistent with the certified condition (e.g., recreational activity during an absence certified for a physical condition that would preclude such activity).
- The employee's use pattern has changed materially from the certified baseline.

**Any of these triggers requires escalation to Benefits Manager per Section 22. The Leave Coordinator does NOT disclose pattern concerns to the manager or employee.**

## **20. Return-to-Work Procedure and Case Closure Checklist**

This section describes the generalized return-to-work procedure for all leave types, plus the mandatory case closure checklist. For FMLA-specific return-to-work rules, see Section 23. For intermittent leave, cases remain open for the duration of the certified period; closure occurs when the certification expires or the employee no longer needs the leave.

### **20.1 Pre-Return Checklist**

Five business days before the scheduled return from any continuous leave, the Leave Coordinator must:

- Verify that fitness-for-duty certification has been received, if required for the case (see Section 23 for when FFD is required).
- Confirm the return date with the employee via email using Template 9.
- Review any work restrictions noted on the fitness-for-duty certification.
- Check that all required leave documentation is filed in the correct location (medical documents in , non-medical in the regular HR file).

Two business days before the scheduled return:

- Notify the employee's manager of the expected return date and any work restrictions using Template 12. Do NOT include the medical reason for any restrictions.
- If work restrictions exist: confirm with the manager that Ridgeline can accommodate the restrictions. If the manager indicates restrictions cannot be accommodated, ESCALATE to HR Director per Section 5.3 - this triggers an ADA-like analysis.

### **20.2 Day-of-Return Procedure**

- **Step 1:** Manager confirms return in #leave-intake using the format: RETURN CONFIRMED: [Case ID], [Return Date].

- **Step 2:** Leave Coordinator posts to #payroll-coordination with the standard leave notification format for the return event.
- **Step 3:** Leave Coordinator updates leave\_tracker.xlsx: populate Actual End Date, set Case Status to "Closed - Returned".
- **Step 4:** Leave Coordinator begins the case closure checklist (Section 22).

### 20.3 Case Closure Checklist

Every case must complete the following checklist before being marked Closed in leave\_tracker.xlsx. Missing any item is a process violation.

- ☐ Actual End Date populated in leave\_tracker.xlsx.
- ☐ Case Status set to Closed.
- ☐ All medical documents filed in [Employee\_ID]/ with the standard filename format.
- ☐ All non-medical documents (e.g., jury summons, military orders, bereavement documentation) filed in the employee's regular HR file.
- ☐ Fitness-for-duty certification filed (if applicable).
- ☐ Manager has confirmed return in #leave-intake (for leaves where return-to-work applies).
- ☐ Payroll Lead notified of the return date or closure via #payroll-coordination.
- ☐ Any PTO substitution reconciled with Payroll (notification posted to #payroll-coordination).
- ☐ Final rolling 12-month FMLA balance calculated and logged in the case notes (for FMLA cases).
- ☐ FAMLII coordination log entry updated to reflect case closure (for FAMLII cases).
- ☐ HFWA balance updated (for cases that included concurrent HFWA use).
- ☐ Case notes updated with closure date and a one-line case summary.
- ☐ All related HR Leave Deadlines calendar events cancelled or marked complete.
- ☐ Email thread moved to the Closed Cases folder per Section 23.

### 20.4 Failure to Return

If the employee does not return on the scheduled return date and has not contacted the Leave Coordinator, manager, or HR with a legitimate reason for extension, proceed as follows:

- **Step 1:** Do NOT assume the employee has abandoned their job. Many legitimate reasons for no-show exist, including medical emergency and communication failure.
- **Step 2:** On the day of no-show, attempt to contact the employee once using the contact preference on file (from leave\_tracker.xlsx). Use Template 10.
- **Step 3:** If no response within 2 business days: ESCALATE to HR Director per Section 5.3.
- **Step 4:** Do NOT communicate with the manager about potential termination, job abandonment, or discipline. All such communications are the HR Director's responsibility.
- **Step 5:** Keep the case Open with Case Status = "Failure to Return - Escalated" until the HR Director directs closure.

## 20.5 Extensions Requested Before Return

- If the employee requests an extension before the scheduled return date, determine whether the extension keeps the employee within the 12-week (or 26-week military caregiver) FMLA cap.
- If the extension is within the cap: request updated medical certification using Template 7. Update Expected End Date in leave\_tracker.xlsx upon receipt of the updated certification. Send updated notices to the employee and manager.
- If the extension exceeds the FMLA cap: ESCALATE to Benefits Manager per Section 5.2. Do not approve extensions beyond the cap independently.
- If the extension is for FAMLI but not FMLA (e.g., employee has exhausted their 12-week FMLA entitlement but has remaining weeks under FAMLI's separate calendar-year cap): verify FAMLI remaining balance in famli\_coordination\_log.xlsx and submit an updated Employer Response via email to CDLE at [claims@famli.colorado.gov](mailto:claims@famli.colorado.gov) if needed.

## 21. Denials, Disputes & Escalations

This section consolidates the denial and escalation procedures that appear in individual leave-type sections (Section 23 for FMLA, Section 14 for FAMLI, Section 14 for ADA). When any denial, dispute, or legal threat arises, consult this section alongside the specific leave-type section.

### 21.1 Denial Authority Recap

The Leave Coordinator's denial authority is narrow. Reference Section 5 for the full authority matrix.

- Denials the LC may issue independently: FMLA ineligibility due to tenure or hours (non-exempt employees only).
- Denials requiring Benefits Manager approval: insufficient certification, exhausted entitlement, non-qualifying reason, second/third opinion cases, HFWA classification disputes, FAMLI denials.
- Denials requiring HR Director approval: ADA-related decisions, fitness-for-duty disputes, failure-to-return cases.
- Denials requiring General Counsel consultation: any case involving mention of an attorney, EEOC, CDLE, DOL, Colorado Civil Rights Division, or lawsuit; any retaliation allegation; any case connected to active litigation.

### 21.2 Processing an Independent Denial

For LC-level denials only (FMLA tenure/hours ineligibility):

- **Step 1:** Confirm the specific failed criterion from employee\_roster.xlsx and hours\_worked\_log.xlsx. For non-exempt employees, the data must be unambiguous. For exempt employees, escalate even when imputed hours appear below 1,250.
- **Step 2:** Prepare the WH-381 with Part A filled out and marked "You are not eligible" and the specific failed criterion noted in the comments field.
- **Step 3:** Send the denial using Template 3. CC the Benefits Manager.
- **Step 4:** Update leave\_tracker.xlsx: Case Status = Denied, with a Notes entry explaining the basis.

- **Step 5:** Check FMLI eligibility separately — an employee ineligible for FMLA may still be eligible for FMLI. If FMLI eligibility is possible, always open a NEW Case ID in leave\_tracker.xlsx with Leave Type = “FMLI” and Case Status = “Intake” per Section 14.6. Do not reuse or update the denied FMLA case row. The denied row must remain intact as the record of the FMLA ineligibility determination. If the original case was opened as “FMLA + FMLI” under the multi-type rule (Section 9.3), the new FMLI-only row still replaces it for active tracking — the original row retains Case Status = Denied.
- **Step 6:** Post to #leave-intake: FMLA DENIED (INELIGIBILITY): [Case ID], [Failed Criterion].

### 21.3 Processing an Escalated Denial

For any denial above LC authority:

- **Step 1:** Prepare a case summary in leave\_tracker.xlsx Notes: employee name, Employee ID, requested leave, reason category, basis for possible denial, any relevant prior communications.
- **Step 2:** Forward the email thread and case summary to the appropriate authority via the appropriate Slack channel: Benefits Manager via #benefits-team, HR Director via #hr-escalations, General Counsel via #legal-review.
- **Step 3:** WAIT for written approval before communicating with the employee. Do not speculate about the likely outcome.
- **Step 4:** When approval is received, send the denial using the appropriate template as directed by the approving authority.
- **Step 5:** Log in leave\_tracker.xlsx with Case Status = Denied and the authority who approved the denial.

### 21.4 Employee Disputes and Reconsideration Requests

- If an employee responds challenging any denial - including LC-level denials - do NOT reply. Forward the response to the Benefits Manager and wait for direction.
- If an employee provides new information that might change the denial decision (e.g., disputes the hours worked log, provides a corrected medical certification), forward the new information to the Benefits Manager with a brief summary of what has changed. Do not attempt to resolve the dispute independently.
- If an employee requests a reconsideration in writing, forward to the Benefits Manager. The Benefits Manager decides whether reconsideration is warranted.

### 21.5 Legal Threats

Treat any of the following as a legal threat triggering the escalation procedure in this subsection:

- Mention of an attorney, lawyer, legal counsel, or law firm.
- Mention of EEOC, CDLE, DOL, Colorado Civil Rights Division, or any other regulatory body.
- Mention of a lawsuit, claim, or legal action (actual or threatened).
- Mention of retaliation, discrimination, or interference claims.
- Any case where the employee is simultaneously involved in active litigation with Ridgeline.

Procedure when a legal threat is identified:

- **Step 1:** DO NOT reply to the email under any circumstances, even to acknowledge receipt.
- **Step 2:** Post to #legal-review using the format: LEGAL THREAT: [Case ID], [Subject Line], [Brief Description] - do not reply.
- **Step 3:** Forward the email thread and the full case file to General Counsel (Evelyn Marchetti) at evelyn.marchetti@ridgelineholdings.com with subject line "LEGAL THREAT - [Employee Name] - [Case ID]".
- **Step 4:** Update leave\_tracker.xlsx: Case Status = Escalated - Legal Review. All further communication with the employee is handled by General Counsel or as directed.
- **Step 5:** If the manager, employee, or any other party contacts the Leave Coordinator about the case after the legal escalation: do not respond. Forward all communications to General Counsel.

## 22. Recurring Issues & Pattern Flags

A recurring issue is a pattern of leave usage that suggests the leave case may not be operating as certified, or that the employee may have an underlying issue the current case does not address. Recurring issues require sensitive handling because they often involve medical information protected by FMLA, ADA, and GINA. The Leave Coordinator's role is to identify patterns, document them, and escalate - never to confront the employee or inform the manager without direction.

### 22.1 What Counts as a Recurring Issue

- Absences in a rolling 30-day window where actual usage exceeds the certified frequency by more than 50% (consistent with Sections 13.6, 19.2, and 19.4). No minimum number of individual absences is required to trigger this flag - a single absence block that alone puts actual 30-day usage more than 50% above the certified baseline is sufficient.
- Two or more separate leave cases for the same employee within 6 months involving related reasons (e.g., multiple serious health condition cases).
- A pattern of absences clustering on specific days (Mondays, Fridays, days before/after holidays or paid leave periods).
- A manager report of suspected abuse or observation inconsistent with certification (see Section 10).
- Observation by the Leave Coordinator during a routine 30-day intermittent case review (Section 22).
- Any pattern where the employee's actual use diverges substantially from the certified baseline.

### 22.2 Pattern Flag Procedure

- **Step 1:** Identify the specific pattern and the supporting data from leave\_tracker.xlsx and leave\_history.xlsx. Do not rely on impression - calculate actual usage and compare to certified frequency.
- **Step 2:** Document the pattern in leave\_tracker.xlsx case notes. Be specific: date range, number of absences, certified frequency, actual frequency, any observed clustering.

- **Step 3:** Post to #hr-escalations using the format: RECURRING ISSUE: [Case ID], [Pattern Description], [Data Points] - please review.
- **Step 4:** Forward any relevant email thread (e.g., a manager report that triggered the flag) to the Benefits Manager with subject line "RECURRING ISSUE - [Case ID]".
- **Step 5:** Add a case note entry: "Pattern flagged [date] - [description] - escalated to Benefits Manager per Section 22."
- **Step 6:** Do NOT communicate the flag to the employee, their manager, or any other party. Pattern information is medical-related and confidential.
- **Step 7:** Wait for direction from the Benefits Manager before taking any further action on the case.

### 22.3 Possible Benefits Manager Responses

The Benefits Manager may direct any of the following, based on the specific pattern:

- No action - the pattern is consistent with the certification within normal variance. Document the decision in case notes.
- Updated medical certification - the LC requests updated certification per Section 22 using Template 7.
- Second opinion - the Benefits Manager may direct that Ridgeline seek a second opinion at Ridgeline's expense. This is rare and is handled by the Benefits Manager, not the LC.
- Re-interview with the employee to clarify the condition or frequency - handled by the Benefits Manager.
- Escalation to HR Director for discipline review - only in extreme cases involving suspected fraud, and handled by the Benefits Manager and HR Director together.

### 22.4 Confidentiality of Pattern Information

Pattern information is derived from medical certifications and absence data, both of which are protected health and leave information. The following rules are absolute:

- Never disclose a pattern flag to the employee's manager without explicit Benefits Manager approval.
- Never discuss pattern concerns with the employee without Benefits Manager direction.
- Never include pattern details in any Slack post or email outside of the approved escalation chain (#hr-escalations, #benefits-team, #legal-review).
- Never place pattern documentation in the employee's general personnel file. All pattern-related notes live in leave\_tracker.xlsx case notes and in as needed.
- Never suggest to any party that the employee's leave usage is suspicious, even in casual conversation.

## 23. Confidentiality & File Handling

Leave administration involves protected health information, genetic information, disability information, and other sensitive employee data. Confidentiality is not optional - it is a legal requirement under FMLA, ADA, GINA, HIPAA (when applicable), and Colorado law. This section defines the file structure, access rules, and communication limits that protect employee privacy.

### **23.1 Medical File Separation**

- All medical information must be stored in [Employee\_ID]/ with restricted access.
- Access to is limited to: HR Director, Benefits Manager, and Leave Coordinator. No other role has access, including HR Generalists, Payroll Lead, Safety Coordinator, IT, or managers.
- Medical information includes: completed medical certifications (WH-380-E, WH-380-F), fitness-for-duty certifications, ADA intake documents, accommodation documentation, health-related emails between the employee and the LC, and any notes derived from medical information.
- Non-medical leave documents (bereavement documentation, jury summons, military orders, leave approval letters) are stored in the employee's regular HR file, NOT in .
- File naming conventions: [Document Type]\_[Case ID]\_[Date].pdf. Example: WH-380-E\_LC-2026-0342\_20260420.pdf.

### **23.2 Email Confidentiality**

- Never include medical details, diagnoses, or protected health information in the body of any email. References to a case by Case ID and general type (e.g., "FMLA") are permissible; references to the underlying condition are not.
- Never CC anyone outside the HR team (HR Director, Benefits Manager, HR Generalists, Payroll Lead, Safety Coordinator, General Counsel) on a case-related email. Managers receive their own notifications via Template 11, which does not include medical details.
- Never forward an email thread containing medical information beyond the HR team without explicit authorization from the Benefits Manager.
- If an employee sends an email containing more medical detail than needed, do not reply to the thread with that detail quoted. Start a new thread if needed, or reply with the detail redacted.
- Never use the employee's personal email to discuss case details unless the employee has specifically requested it AND the email does not contain medical details.

### **23.3 Slack Confidentiality**

- Never post medical details, diagnoses, or protected health information in any Slack channel, including #hr-escalations and #benefits-team.
- Case notifications in Slack must be limited to Case ID, leave type (general category), priority, and the minimum information needed for the intended audience.
- Never tag managers or non-HR roles in #leave-intake or any other case-related channel. Managers receive notifications via email templates, not Slack.
- Direct messages about cases are prohibited. All case communication must happen in the designated channels where it is auditable.

### **23.4 Verbal Confidentiality**

- Do not discuss specific cases in open offices, hallways, break rooms, or any location where others may overhear.
- Do not acknowledge another employee's leave status to coworkers or any party outside the HR team. The correct response to "is [Employee] on leave?" is: "I'm not able to discuss other employees' status. If you need to reach them, please use the appropriate channel."

- Never confirm or deny leave status to external callers, vendors, references, background checkers, or family members (except as specifically authorized by the employee).
- If an employee's spouse, parent, or other family member contacts the Leave Coordinator claiming to act on the employee's behalf: do not disclose any information. Ask them to have the employee contact you directly.

### **23.5 Records Retention**

- Leave case files are retained per Ridgeline's records retention policy (Handbook §9.3): 7 years from case closure for FMLA/FAMLI cases, 5 years for ADA cases, 4 years for other leave types.
- Medical records are retained separately from non-medical records per the file-separation rules in Section 23.
- Do not delete any case file without written authorization from the Benefits Manager.
- When retention periods expire, case files are destroyed per the HR Director's annual retention review. The Leave Coordinator does not independently destroy files.

### **23.6 GINA Compliance**

The Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act prohibits the collection and use of genetic information, including family medical history, in most employment decisions. FMLA medical certifications occasionally include such information inadvertently.

- When requesting medical certification, use only the standard DOL forms (WH-380-E, WH-380-F). Do not add custom questions that could elicit genetic information.
- If a returned medical certification contains family medical history, genetic test results, or other GINA-protected information: do not retain the original PDF in the standard case file. PDF redaction requires specialized tools and is error-prone, so do NOT attempt to redact the PDF directly.
- Instead, create a sanitized text summary as a .docx file containing only the FMLA-relevant fields: employee name, Case ID, leave start and end dates, certified frequency (for intermittent), expected duration, and confirmation that a provider's signature is present. Do NOT transcribe medical descriptions, diagnoses, family history, or any other clinical content. Save the summary as [Case ID]\_cert\_summary.docx in [Employee\_ID]/.
- Forward the original PDF (with the GINA-protected information intact) to General Counsel (Evelyn Marchetti) at [evelyn.marchetti@ridgelineholdings.com](mailto:evelyn.marchetti@ridgelineholdings.com) with subject line "GINA - Original Medical Cert - [Case ID]". General Counsel will store and dispose of the original per legal requirements. Do NOT keep a local copy of the original PDF in the standard case folder.
- Add a case note: "GINA-protected content received [date]; sanitized summary saved as [Case ID]\_cert\_summary.docx; original forwarded to General Counsel." Reference only the sanitized .docx in all subsequent case actions.
- Escalate any GINA concern to General Counsel per Section 5.4, particularly if the employee raises a GINA question or if the extra information appears intentional rather than incidental.
- Never ask the employee or the provider follow-up questions about family medical history, even if the information would appear relevant to the case.

## 24. Quality Controls

This document is maintained by the Benefits Manager and reviewed annually. Changes to this document require approval from both the HR Director and, for any change affecting legal compliance, General Counsel.

- Annual review: This SOP is reviewed each April by the Benefits Manager and HR Director. The next scheduled review is April 1, 2027.
- Legal-change review: If any federal or Colorado law affecting FMLA, FMLI, HFWA, ADA, USERRA, or related areas is amended, this SOP must be updated within 30 calendar days of the change's effective date. The Benefits Manager is responsible for monitoring legal changes via CDLE bulletins, DOL newsletters, and Ridgeline's employment counsel.
- Policy-change review: If any Ridgeline policy affecting leave (PTO, bereavement, personal leave, handbook references) is amended, this SOP must be updated within 14 calendar days of the policy change.
- Case audit: The Benefits Manager conducts a quarterly audit of open and recently closed cases to verify SOP compliance. The audit includes: sampling of 10 closed cases, verification of deadline adherence, verification of file filing locations, review of Slack posts for confidentiality compliance, and review of case notes for completeness.
- SOP change log: Every change to this document is logged in the SOP Change Log maintained by the Benefits Manager. The log records the date, the change, the approver, and the reason.
- Approval requirements: All changes require Benefits Manager drafting, HR Director approval, and (for compliance-related changes) General Counsel review. Emergency changes (e.g., immediate legal change) may be implemented by the Benefits Manager with HR Director verbal approval and General Counsel review within 7 days.

## 25. Email Housekeeping

After processing every leave-related email, the Leave Coordinator must complete the housekeeping actions below. Email discipline is critical for confidentiality compliance and for workflow continuity when the Leave Coordinator is out of office.

### 25.1 General Rules

| Rule               | Action                                                                                                                                               |
|--------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Mark as read       | Every processed email must be marked as read, without exception. Unread emails signal unprocessed work; never leave a processed email marked unread. |
| P1 / P2 emails     | Leave in the Inbox and flag as important. Do NOT move to a folder until the underlying case is fully resolved or closed.                             |
| P3 / P4 emails     | Move to the matching folder (see Section 25) after initial processing. Do not flag.                                                                  |
| Multi-topic emails | File in the folder matching the highest-priority topic. If topics are equal priority, use the folder listed first in Section 23.                     |

| Rule                  | Action                                                                                                                                   |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Medical content       | Never retain medical details in email. Extract and file per Section 23, then keep only the administrative metadata in the email archive. |
| Unknown senders       | After posting to #unknown-senders-hr and forwarding to Benefits Manager, move the email to the Unknown Senders folder.                   |
| Manager notifications | After sending, move the outgoing email to the matching case folder. Do not keep manager notifications in the Sent Items folder.          |

## 25.2 Email Folders

| Folder Name             | Use For                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| FMLA Cases              | All FMLA-related emails (intake, certification, designation, tracking, closure) for currently open FMLA cases.                                                                     |
| FAMLI Cases             | All FAMLI-related emails for currently open FAMLI cases. If FMLA + FAMLI concurrent, file in FMLA Cases and cross-reference in the FAMLI coordination log.                         |
| ADA Intake              | All ADA accommodation request emails, from intake through routing to HR Director. Any subsequent correspondence after HR Director handoff is owned by the HR Director, not the LC. |
| HFWA & Paid Leave       | HFWA sick leave, company PTO, bereavement, and jury duty correspondence.                                                                                                           |
| Personal/Military Leave | USERRA cases and personal unpaid leave cases.                                                                                                                                      |
| Closed Cases            | Any case correspondence for a case with Case Status = Closed in leave_tracker.xlsx. Move the full email thread to this folder at case closure per Section 22.                      |
| Unknown Senders         | Emails from senders not found in employee_roster.xlsx, after posting to #unknown-senders-hr.                                                                                       |
| General                 | Non-case correspondence, feedback, compliments, and administrative emails not related to a specific case.                                                                          |

*Folder names must match exactly as listed. Do not create new folders or use variations. Sub-folders within these top-level folders are not permitted - the Case ID in the email subject line is sufficient for navigation within a folder.*

## 26. Email Templates & Scripts

All employee, manager, and internal communications use the templates below. These templates exist to ensure consistency, completeness, and confidentiality compliance. The Leave Coordinator must follow these rules without exception:

- Use templates as written. Personalize the greeting only.
- Replace all [bracketed] placeholders with confirmed information before sending. Never send a template that contains an unfilled placeholder.
- Do not add medical details, diagnoses, or other protected health information to any template.
- Do not delete sections of a template. If a section does not apply, omit only the optional bracketed sub-sections clearly marked with conditional language (e.g., "[If FFD required: ...]").
- Do not invent new templates. If a situation arises that is not covered by an existing template, escalate to the Benefits Manager rather than drafting your own communication.
- All employee-facing templates close with the standard signature block: "Best regards," / "Ridgeline Gear Co. - Leave Coordinator" / "leaves@ridgelinegear.com ". Manager-facing templates use the same signature.

Template text is maintained in templates.json. That file is the authoritative source for all 31 templates. Use the Template ID listed below to locate the correct template. Do not modify templates.json directly — any template changes require Benefits Manager approval.

#### **Template Index:**

- Template 1 — Intake Information Request
- Template 2 — FMLA Eligibility Notice (Eligible)
- Template 3 — FMLA Ineligibility Notice
- Template 4 — FMLA Designation Notice
- Template 5 — Medical Certification Incomplete
- Template 6 — Medical Certification Reminder
- Template 7 — Medical Certification Renewal/Extension Request
- Template 8 — Fitness-for-Duty Reminder
- Template 9 — Return Confirmation
- Template 10 — Return Follow-Up (No-Show)
- Template 11 — Manager Leave Notification
- Template 12 — Return-to-Work Manager Notification
- Template 13 — Manager Information Response
- Template 14 — Manager Medical-Information Decline
- Template 15 — Manager Pattern Response
- Template 16 — Payroll Handoff (Employee)
- Template 17 — Manager Payroll Handoff
- Template 18 — FAML I Concurrent Designation
- Template 19 — ADA Acknowledgment
- Template 20 — HFWA Balance Response
- Template 21 — HFWA Documentation Request
- Template 22 — PTO Substitution Acknowledgment
- Template 23 — Bereavement Acknowledgment
- Template 24 — Bereavement Reclassification
- Template 25 — Military Leave Acknowledgment

- Template 26 — Personal Leave Acknowledgment
- Template 27 — Personal Leave Routing (to Manager and HR Director)
- Template 28 — Personal Leave Approved
- Template 29 — Personal Leave Denied
- Template 30 — Bereavement Not Covered (Non-Qualifying Relationship)
- Template 31 — FMLI-Only Intake Acknowledgment

— *End of Ridgeline Leave Coordinator SOP* —