Podcast Title: Get to Know IDAM: Essential Services, Processes, and Common Misconceptions

Season: 1, Episode 45

Host: Soomin Suh

Guest: Gayle Tornberg, Salena Quan, Elizabeth Muñoz

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[00:00:09] **Soomin Suh:** Hi everyone, this is Soomin from Berkeley Lab's Strategic Communications team. I'm here today with Gayle Tornberg, Salena Quan, and Elizabeth Muñoz from the Integrated Disability and Absence Management Office, or IDAM for short. Thanks all for being here today. Can you briefly introduce yourself and tell us about your role at the Lab?

[00:00:28] **Gayle Tornberg:** Yes. Hi, I'm Gayle Tornberg and I'm a senior IDAM analyst, and I've been at the Lab for 18 years. I started in benefits and then I moved over to disability management.

[00:00:40] **Salena Quan:** Hi, I am Salena Quan, and I am a case manager. I've been at the Lab for three years. I started in Health Services and now I'm with the IDAM team.

[00:00:51] **Elizabeth Muñoz:** I'm Elizabeth Muñoz. I'm the newest team member on the IDAM team. I've only been here five months, but I'm happy to be [00:01:00] here and help everybody.

[00:01:01] **Soomin Suh:** Great. Thank you all so much for being here.

[00:01:04] Could you start by giving us a brief overview of IDAM's core services?

[00:01:09] **Gayle Tornberg:** The Lab's Integrated Disability and Absence Management office is a one-stop resource for employees who need to take a medical or family leave, have a workers' compensation injury or illness, or need a workplace accommodation. We help employees navigate leave policies and ensure that leads and accommodations are following federal and state laws, laboratory policies, and collective bargaining agreements.

[00:01:36] We also support employees in returning to work safely and offer confidential support and guidance every step of the way. We're here to help.

[00:01:46] **Soomin Suh:** Great. Thank you. What are some common accommodation requests that employees might not realize are available or straightforward to arrange through IDAM?

[00:01:55] **Elizabeth Munoz:** One of the things that comes to mind right away is people think [00:02:00] accommodations is this huge, complicated process, and it's really not. Just reaching out to IDAM and letting us know that an employee needs an accommodation and we can get the process started, whether it be for parking, workplace accommodations, even as far as travel.

[00:02:18] One of the simplest accommodations that I can think of is getting an ergonomic evaluation of an employee's workstation. Of course, that's handled through our amazing ergonomics team, but that is one of the things that an employee can get their chair, their desk, their monitor, all reviewed and fitted perfectly to their needs.

[00:02:40] And that is one of the things that can help prevent injuries down the road.

[00:02:44] **Soomin Suh:** Awesome. Thank you. For employees wondering if IDAM is the right resource for them. What are the key situations when contacting your office can make the biggest positive difference?

[00:02:54] **Salena Quan:** If you're not sure about the type of leave that you need to take or what [00:03:00] you're eligible for, how much time off, please just email us at idam@lbl.gov.

[00:03:07] We're happy to assist you in seeing what you're eligible for or at least point you in the direction that you need.

[00:03:13] **Soomin Suh:** Once an employee decides to reach out, what's the very first step they should take? What can they expect in terms of the initial process and is there any information they should have handy to make that first contact smoother?

[00:03:24] **Gayle Tornberg:** Yes, on our IDAM website, we have a leave request form. It's just simply put your name, your employee number, and what type of leave that you're looking to take. We will, get back to you by five business days and send you a packet of information for you to review.

[00:03:44] This packet of information includes whether you're eligible for the leave or not, medical certification forms if it's a medical leave, and other forms that we'll need in order to review and process your leave. We request [00:04:00] that employees start their leave if they know within 30 days in advance of the leave, if it's unforeseeable, contact us right away so we can help you through that.

[00:04:11] That's simple, a process. You can always also email us as Salena said at idam@lbl.gov and we're happy to help.

[00:04:22] **Soomin Suh:** Thanks Gayle.

[00:04:23] Are there one or two frequently asked questions or common misconceptions about IDAM that you'd like to address for our listeners right now?

[00:04:31] **Elizabeth Munoz:** That's a great one. One of the most common misconceptions is that employees reach out and they say, you know, I have a whole bunch of sick time. I don't need FML. I'll just use my sick time to cover it. But that's one of the misunderstandings of what FML is for. Your sick time is more about getting paid while FML is about protecting your job while you're out.

[00:04:56] So they work hand in hand. So even though you have [00:05:00] enough sick time to cover your leave, you still want to apply for FML to get your job protection, and that's what our office is here to help you do.

[00:05:08] **Soomin Suh:** Finally, for anyone who wants to learn more, where's the best place for employees to find additional information and resources about IDAM services?

[00:05:16] **Salena Quan:** We do have a website, it's go.lbl.gov/idam and email is the best way to contact us if you have specific questions.

[00:05:27] **Soomin Suh:** Perfect. Thank you all so much for taking the time to share more about IDAM. To learn more, visit, go.lbl.gov/id am . This is Soomin from the Strategic Communications team at Berkeley Lab.