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**Andy Beshear**  
Governor

**Jamie Link**  
Secretary, Education and Labor Cabinet

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## Employment First Council Advocacy and Education Committee

Minutes  
February 6, 2026  
9:00 am – 10:00 am (EST)  
Zoom  
Meeting ID: 843 2807 2518

### Members Present

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Committee Chair, Amanda Owen, Council Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley, Bill Bates, Megan Kuhlwein, David Allgood, Melanie Lybarger, and Carrie Wedding

### Members Absent

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Susan Brown and Jeff Edwards

### Staff Present

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Nanci Howard, Michelle Cobb, and Anu Kumari

### Welcome | Introduction | Agenda Review

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Employment First Advocacy and Education Committee Chair, Amanda Owen, welcomed attendees. Introductions were held. The agenda was reviewed and acknowledged by all participants.

### FAQ Document Update

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The committee discussed recent updates and ongoing use of the Employment First Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document. Members shared that the FAQ is used

regularly by educators, employment specialists, and independent living partners, and that format improvements have made it easier to locate and share targeted information.

The committee noted that the FAQ is available on the [Employment First Kentucky website](#) and is approved for broad dissemination. Members emphasized that sharing the approved FAQ link does not require additional approvals, provided the document is not recreated or modified. Any newly created materials using Employment First branding (e.g., new flyers with logos) require review and approval through the appropriate communications and accessibility process.

### *Key Discussion Points:*

#### **Increased Usability**

The FAQ [landing page](#) and audience-specific sections support quick sharing with target audiences.

#### **Current Dissemination Efforts**

Members reported sharing the FAQ with internal teams, linking it via QR codes at events, and discussing incorporating it into routine outreach practices (e.g., adding the link to an email signature).

#### **QR Code Development**

The committee discussed creating a universal QR code linking directly to the approved FAQ landing page for consistent statewide use.

#### **Employment First Handout Update**

Updating the commonly used two-page Employment First Kentucky handout to include the FAQ link and/or QR code.

### *Next Steps:*

The committee agreed that expanding awareness and improving guidance for educators should be the next steps on how to use the FAQ will support increased utilization. Members will continue to explore dissemination opportunities through newsletters, presentations, and professional communication channels.

## Update on Email Templates

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The committee reviewed updates to draft email templates. Members noted the need for stronger introductory messaging to help audiences understand what Employment First is, why it matters, and how to use the FAQ resource in practice.

### *Key Discussion Points:*

#### Introductory Context

Emails distributed with the FAQ document should clearly explain:

- What is Employment First?
- Why it matters in Kentucky.
- How it supports transition planning and student outcomes.
- How the FAQ resource supports implementation.

#### Education-Focused Messaging

Messaging should be tailored for special education directors, transition staff, and teachers, using practical, application-focused language for use in IEP meetings, transition planning, and family engagement.

#### Distribution Strategies

The committee discussed sharing messaging through established statewide communication methods, including education channels (e.g., KDE listservs or newsletters), professional networks, and trusted regional partners.

#### Engagement Efforts

The committee discussed supplementing the emails with additional formats such as short videos, podcasts, or message series to improve engagement.

#### DOSE Institute Outreach

The Committee discussed exploring potential presentation opportunities at the Directors of Special Education (DOSE) Institute to increase statewide awareness of Employment First among special education leadership. The DOSE Institute is typically held in late summer; dates are to be determined.

This includes gathering information regarding:

- Proposal or presentation submission processes.
- Timeline for submission or selection.
- Potential pathways for Employment First representation at the event.

## Youth Conference and Event Opportunities

Committee member, Megan Kuhlwein, announced that a youth conference is currently being planned, anticipated for early summer, June 11–12, in Lexington, Kentucky, that will include youth with disabilities and a parent or trusted adult learning track. This may provide an opportunity to:

- Share Employment First information and FAQ resources.
- Provide printed materials or resource links.
- Include Employment First as a topic for caregiver or adult learning sessions.

## Action Items

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### FAQ QR Code Development and Distribution

Develop a universal QR code linking directly to the approved [FAQ landing page](#) and place it in the shared Dropbox for statewide partner use.

### Employment First Handout Update

Identify the current owner of the traditional Employment First handout and coordinate updates to include the FAQ link and/or QR code.

### Email Template Refinement and Use

Continue refining email templates and encouraging members to use and adapt them in outreach efforts.

### Kentucky Department of Education Newsletter to Special Education Directors

Develop and submit introductory information, resource highlights, and success stories linked to the FAQ regarding Employment First to the Kentucky Department of Education to include in their monthly newsletter.

### Transition Committee Collaboration

Coordinate with the Employment First Transition Committee to align outreach strategies and support shared messaging and resource promotion for educators.

## **DOSE Institute Presentation Exploration**

Explore opportunities to present Employment First information and resources at the DOSE Institute and gather proposal and timeline information.

## **Youth Outreach and Engagement**

Explore opportunities to share Employment First and FAQ resources at youth-focused events and incorporate youth perspectives and success stories into outreach materials.

## **Conference and Event Outreach Coordination**

Identify and monitor additional opportunities to promote Employment First and FAQ resources.

## **Additional Discussion**

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Employment First Council Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley, will resend the Autism Informed Employer video (Campaign Monitor distribution) to members who may not have received it.

KYOVR Administrator Nanci Howard will email the Chair of the Transition Committee to request that the Advocacy & Education Committee join the Transition Committee meeting scheduled for February 19 at 9:30 AM EST. Upon confirmation, a calendar invitation will be sent to the committee.

## **Public Comments**

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None.

## **Adjournment**

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Employment First Committee Chair, Amanda Owen, thanked everyone for their contribution and adjourned the meeting.

## **Next Meeting Date**

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March 20, 2026

9:00am – 10:00am – Friday