



Kentucky Employment First Council

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Employment First Council

Advocacy and Education Committee

Minutes

March 20, 2026

9:00 am – 10:00 am (EST)

Zoom

Meeting ID: 843 2807 2518

Members' Present

Committee Chair, Amanda Owen, Council Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley, Bill Bates, Thomas Thompson, Tracy Belfield, Melanie Lybarger, and Carrie Wedding

Members Absent

David Allgood, Susan Brown, and Jeff Edwards

Staff Present

Nanci Howard, Michelle Cobb, and Anu Kumari

Welcome | Agenda Review

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

Partnership with the Employment First Transition Committee

The committee discussed collaboration with the Transition Committee on shared goals related to education and outreach of resources to expand the reach of Employment First initiatives.

As part of this collaboration, sharing Employment First resources such as the FAQ, and other transition resources. The purpose is to coordinate efforts to avoid duplication and identify key audiences, not only to strengthen new partnerships but build upon those

The committees also emphasized the use of a QR code linked to the FAQ landing page and discussed tracking its use in presentations and outreach materials to measure impact and support reporting.

Newsletter Content Discussion

The committee discussed developing newsletter content to support Employment First awareness, particularly for educators and special education leadership.

Members emphasized concise, engaging content using short “hook” statements to direct readers to key resources, ensuring it is practical, relevant, and aligned with educators’ responsibilities.

Discussion highlights included:

- Developing targeted messaging that links to FAQ and transition resources.
- Addressing educator challenges.
- Ensuring content supports existing work rather than adding additional burden.
- Recognizing the need to clearly communicate what actions educators should take next.
- Including actionable steps to connect students to services and supports.
- Providing accurate Vocational Rehabilitation messaging, including:
 - Encouraging early application and placement on the waitlist
 - Communicating Order of Selection Impacts
 - Highlighting available services, such as Pre-ETS
 - Clarifying actions available while waiting for services

The committee noted that while newsletters are valuable, in-person outreach (e.g., DOSE meetings) may be more effective. The committee also emphasized the need for consistent messaging to increase awareness and utilization of resources.

Additionally, the committee reviewed existing resources and tools to support outreach and content development, including:

- The [Autism-Informed Employer](#) (AIE) video series, noting that three short (approximately two-minute) episodes had been released, provides practical strategies related to hiring and interviewing Autistic job candidates.
- The [Supported Employment Training Project \(SETP\) Job Seekers, Families, and Supporters](#) webpage is identified as a useful resource for families seeking employment-related information and guidance.
- The Employment First Council flyer, which was developed to direct individuals to Vocational Rehabilitation services and provide information on [how to get help finding a job](#).

The committee discussed the use of emerging tools, such as Google Notebook, to support podcast-style or audio content as a potential outreach strategy.

A shared document will be used to collaboratively develop newsletter content.

Additional Projects for 2026 Discussion

The committee discussed potential projects and strategic initiatives to support ongoing Employment First efforts in 2026.

Key areas of consideration included:

- Development of standardized messaging scripts for multiple audiences (educators, employers, families).
- Expansion of coordinated outreach efforts through shared contacts and networks to strengthen statewide engagement.
- Exploration of alternative outreach formats (e.g., short videos, AI-generated content, podcast-style messaging).
- Increased use and tracking of FAQ QR code engagement across presentations and materials.
- Continued development of a structured newsletter content strategy.
- Exploration of improving FAQ accessibility, including transitioning from a PDF to a web-based format to address accessibility and maintenance challenges.

The committee noted limitations of the current state website, including reduced flexibility, limited engagement, and challenges with tracking metrics, and discussed exploring alternative approaches.

Action Items

- Develop concise Employment First language for statewide education newsletters.
- Identify and prioritize topics to support quarterly newsletter contributions.
- Create and maintain a shared document (e.g., Google Doc) to support collaborative development of content.
- Develop short, standardized messaging scripts for key audiences.
- Incorporate existing materials, including the FAQ, transition resources, and Autism-Informed Employer video series, into newsletter and outreach content.
- Coordinate with partners to utilize shared outreach networks and ensure efficient, non-duplicative communication.
- Provide approved content to the council for approval and to send to the supporting agency for approval to publicly distribute.
- Ensure clear communication of application steps, waitlist expectations, and available support, including actions to take while waiting for services, is explained. Also, direct consumers, educators, providers, etc., on how to connect to services.
- Promote use of the FAQ QR code and explore tracking options.
- Engage education-focused members to review draft content to ensure clarity, relevance, and usability.
- Continue identifying and documenting partner organizations and distribution networks to support expanded outreach efforts.

Public Comments

None.

Adjournment

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

Next Meeting Date

May 1, 2026

9:00am – 10:00am – Friday (EST)