

**Kentucky Employment First Council**

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Employment First Council

Advocacy and Education Committee

Minutes

May 1, 2026

9:00 am – 10:00 am (EST)

Zoom

Meeting ID: 843 2807 2518

Members' Present

Council Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley, Thomas Thompson, Tracy Belfield, Melanie Lybarger, Megan Kuhlwein, and Carrie Wedding

Members' Absent

Amanda Owen, Susan Brown, and Jeff Edwards

Staff Present

Nanci Howard, Michelle Cobb, and Anu Kumari

Welcome

On behalf of the Committee Chair, Employment First Council Chair Katie Wolf Whaley welcomed attendees. The agenda was reviewed and acknowledged by all participants.

Newsletter Content Discussion

The committee reviewed a proposed draft newsletter insert and discussed revisions.

Insert 1: “Start with the Expectation”

The committee recommended refining the opening message to ensure it is clear, concise, and impactful.

The following draft language was discussed for inclusion/exclusion:

The line “*it’s not only for some students,*” was removed to avoid duplication. It was suggested to add language to explain why employment matters.

Insert 2: “What This Means for Schools”

The committee discussed including information about the Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (KYOVR).

During the committee meeting, the following draft language was proposed by OVR staff support and included in the chat box. Additionally, the following language was initially approved by Cabinet Communications:

Have you heard about the Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR)? Think OVR when you are thinking about the transition needs of your students. OVR assists students in moving from school to employment or further education that leads to employment, aligning with the mission to help individuals with disabilities gain independence and economic security through work.

OVR is currently in Order of Selection (OOS) due to the inability to serve all eligible individuals. However, students should still apply to secure their place in line for when the agency begins to serve those individuals on the waiting list. More information can be found at [Order of Selection - Kentucky Career Center](#).

Once OVR begins serving individuals from the wait list, students will be served based on the date they applied for services, so early application is important.

You can find your local OVR office using the Kentucky Career Center website to search based on the student’s home location.

While on the waiting list, students may receive Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) if they received Pre-ETS before being assigned to the wait list. Pre-ETS can help students gain exposure and experiences in careers and employment.

It was suggested that guidance on how to apply for Pre-ETS should be clearly defined to ensure educators understand how to connect students to these services.

Insert 3: “Families Need You to Lead the Conversation”

The committee discussed including targeted resource links to support families and educators without making the insert too long.

Suggested resources include:

- [University of Kentucky resources for job seekers, families, and supporters](#)
- Transition 360 for Families
- Kentucky SPIN (Special Parent Involvement Network)

The committee emphasized keeping this insert brief and limiting the number of links so the message remains clear and easy to use.

Key Considerations

Keep content clear and concise:

Use short, easy-to-read language so educators can quickly understand the message.

Include clear action steps:

Clearly state what educators should do, such as connecting students to services or starting transition conversations.

Use existing communication channels:

Share inserts through established newsletters, including Special Education, Career and Technical Education networks, and regional cooperatives, rather than creating new distribution methods.

Be strategic with timing:

Share information at key points in the school year, such as early in the year for awareness and during spring (April–May) when transition and placement activities are occurring.

Plan ongoing communication:

Consider sharing inserts quarterly to build awareness and reinforce key messages over time.

Tailor messaging to the audience:

Adjust content as needed for educators, families, and workforce partners to ensure relevance and effectiveness.

Allow flexibility:

Access to services such as Pre-ETS may vary by location, so guidance should remain adaptable.

FAQ Document Update

The committee received an update regarding enhancements to the Employment First Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) resource. The current FAQ, previously available as a PDF on the website, will be transitioned into a web-based format to improve accessibility and usability.

The updated FAQ will be hosted on a dedicated webpage with organized sections and expandable topics tailored to specific audiences, including job seekers, families, educators, service providers, and employers. This structure will improve navigation and make it easier for users to locate relevant information. It was noted that OVR staff are working to update and develop the new FAQ webpage.

Updates to the Employment First one-pager were also discussed, including adding a QR code and link to the FAQ. The committee also discussed improving visibility and usability by carefully placing QR codes and links to ensure clarity and accessibility across both digital and print formats.

Public Comments

None.

Adjournment

Employment First Council Chair Katie Wolf Whaley thanked everyone for their contribution and adjourned the meeting.

Next Meeting Date

June 12, 2026
9:00am – 10:00am – Friday (EST)