



Andy Beshear
Governor

Jamie Link
Education and Labor Cabinet Secretary

Advocacy and Education Committee Meeting

Minutes

July 2nd, 2025

9:00am – 10:00am (EST)

Attendees:

Katie Wolf Whaley, Amanda Friend, Bill Bates, Tracy Belfield, Carrie Wedding, Megan Kuhlwein and Melanie Lybarger.

Staff Present:

Nanci Howard, Vocational Rehabilitation Administrator
Anu Kumari, KYOVR Administrative Specialist Senior

Interpreter:

Tara Eversole and Chelsea Naugle.

Members Absent:

Amanda Owen, Jeff Edwards, David Allgood, Morgan Turner and Michelle Cobb.

Welcome:

In the absence of the Committee Chair, Employment First Council Chair Katie Wolf Whaley welcomed everyone to the meeting. The agenda was reviewed by all participants.

Review FAQs Google Doc:

Employment First Council Chair Katie Wolf Whaley discussed the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) document with the committee, with particular emphasis on the '*Educational Professionals section*'. She highlighted Committee Chair Amanda Owen's objective to finalize the document for approval or submission to the full Council for a vote at the upcoming meeting on July 11, 2025.

Educational Professionals Section:

How do I assist students with disabilities prepare for employment?

Answer: You can assist by conducting assessments of their skills and interests, developing individualized employment plans, providing job readiness training, and connecting them with supported employment services that match their goals. You can use the UK-HDI [Transition Checklists](#) as a tool to think about how to build vocational inventories and skills across grade levels.

You can support transition by considering how to implement key pieces of the transition process within your curriculum around the five targeted areas of Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS): Job exploration counseling, Work-based learning experiences, post-secondary opportunities, Work readiness training, and Self-advocacy instruction. This [Pre-ETS flier](#) can help you connect students with Kentucky's Vocational Rehabilitation system, and [this website can help you better understand](#) Pre-ETS and how they can benefit your students.

Committee Members' Suggestions:

It was suggested that the sentence in the second paragraph be rephrased to begin with, "You can support transition by considering how to..." in order to more clearly emphasize the

transition process. The committee member acknowledged the recommendation and incorporated the revised language into the document.

How can I promote Employment First with my students and their families?

Answer: Employment First requires prioritizing employment for individuals with disabilities. As and educator, this begins with maximizing inclusion efforts throughout the student's educational career and creating expectations that life after school will include employment, as it does for other students. You can start conversations around the job search process by sharing resources such as this on [How to Get Help Finding a Job](#) and the [Supported Employment Training Project's website for job seekers and families](#).

Committee Members' Suggestions:

It was suggested to include that the Supported Employment Training Project', team has revised a page intended for job seekers, families, caregivers, and supporters. A link to the updated page was shared in the chat. It was suggested that this page be positioned more prominently for those seeking more in-depth information.

How can I effectively educate and guide the student and/or guardian to help them prepare for employment after high school?

Answer: Stay focused on building skills leading to employment and discussing employment from an early age within ARC meetings. Some suggestions for implementation include regularly including employment planning in conversations, offering age-appropriate career exploration within the classroom but also sharing information with the family and student, collaborating with vocational rehabilitation services, and supporting work-based learning opportunities.

Transition discussions should focus on offering integrated employment opportunities, ensuring access to job coaching, and eliminating barriers that prevent individuals from working in their communities. The transition present levels section within the IEP should highlight student's interests and strengths. It should intentionally discuss key

employability skill development areas such as social communication, self-advocacy, technology literacy, time management, and following workplace instructions.

Successful implementation requires coordinated efforts among special education teachers, general educators, school counselors, rehabilitation specialists, families, and community employment providers. It may be helpful to share [resources that include ideas for families and students to think about employment](#) or to share examples of other people with disabilities who are successfully employed. Here are ways you can share [video examples](#) and [written examples](#).

Educators may also benefit from resources such as the [Kentucky Department of Education's Transition Resources](#), including contact information to [access KY Transition 360 for educators](#), and the [National Technical Assistance Center on Transition](#).

Committee Members' Suggestions:

Council Member Bill Bates suggested and provided an overview of key transition-related initiatives and resources. He emphasized the importance of utilizing the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition: The Collaborative (NTACT:C) in partnership with KDE Transition Education Unit. This collaboration is focused on improving post-secondary outcomes for students with disabilities, including pathways to:

- Additional training
- Competitive integrated employment
- Short-term certificate programs

Bill highlighted that KDE offers a wide range of transition resources, including guidance on transition planning, technical assistance, and transition to post-secondary trainings. He referenced two major initiatives:

- Kentucky Transition 360 for Educators – The program's first cohort of six educators is currently in Tier 2, with a second cohort recently launched. In-person training is scheduled for later this month.
- Kentucky Transition 360 for Families – KDE is in the process of hiring regional family mentors to work directly with families on transition planning, further strengthening community-based support.

Bill offered to share relevant resource links with the committee to enhance awareness and access to these programs.

The committee concluded the discussion and noted that educators could have benefited from Kentucky Department of Education's Transition Resources, including contacts for Kentucky Transition 360 and the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition.

Employer Section:

Council Chair Katie Wolf Whaley highlighted one of the questions under the "*Employer Section*" of the FAQ document.

If an employer is interested in hiring individuals with disabilities, who should they contact? Should they reach out to a local Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, the Employer Services Branch, or is there a designated point of contact within VR that would be most helpful to include?

Committee Members' Suggestions:

There was no clear consensus on a designated Vocational Rehabilitation contact for employer-related inquiries. It was recommended to include Coalition Forward in the employer section. Additional resources, including guidance on accessible job descriptions, will be incorporated.

2025 Annual Report Recommendations:

It was recommended that, once finalized, the FAQ document be included in the 2025 Annual Report. Committee members were also encouraged to share any additional activities.

Vote for Submit FAQs Document to the Employment First Council:

It was stated that, once the FAQ document is finalized and all comments have been removed, it will be submitted to the full Council for a vote on its content.

Employment First Council Chair Katie Wolf Whaley called for a motion to submit the finalized FAQ document to the full Employment First Council for a vote. **Council member Bill Bates made the motion to accept and submit the FAQ document for a vote. The motion was seconded by Amanda Friend. A vote was taken with no opposition or abstentions. The motion passed unanimously.**

Public Comment

No comment was addressed.

Adjournment

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

Next Meeting

Date: October 1st, 2025.

Time: 9:00 am to 10:00 am (EST)

Nanci Howard
Vocational Rehabilitation Administrator
Education and Labor Cabinet, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation
500 Mero Street • 1st Floor SE • Frankfort, KY • 40601
Toll-Free: (800) 372 - 7172 • Email: Nanci.Howard@ky.gov

Created by:
Anu Kumari
Administrative Specialist Senior
500 Mero Street • 1st Floor SE • Frankfort, KY • 40601
Direct: (502) 782-1409 • Email: anukumari@ky.gov