



Andy Beshear
Governor

Jamie Link
Education & Labor Cabinet Secretary

Advocacy and Education Committee

Minutes

November 19, 2024

9:00am – 10:00am

[Zoom Link](#)

Meeting ID: 879 7222 9865

Passcode: 499069

Attendees:

Amanda Owen (Committee Chair)
Katie Wolf Whaley (Council Chair)
Jeff Edwards (Council Member)
David Allgood (Council Member)
Michelle Cobb (Staff Support)
Tracy Belfield (Additional Member)
Susan Brown (Additional Member)
Nanci Howard (Vocational Rehabilitation Administrator)
Anu Kumari (Administrative Specialist Senior)

Members Absent:

Morgan Turner (Council Member)
Andrew Johnson (Council Member)
Amanda Friend (Council Member)
Bill Bates (Council member)

Welcome

Chair, Amanda Owen welcomed and Administrator, Nanci Howard everyone to the meeting. The agenda reviewed by all participants.

Announcements

Administrator, Nanci Howard shared the following announcements:

- **Project NEON** (National Expansion on Employment Opportunities Network): She said the Project NEON application was submitted on November 6th and the announcement for the Core States will be revealed on November 27th.
- **Annual Report Approval:** She announced the Annual Report was submitted on October 30th and has been steadily moving through the Cabinet process. She had no further update at this time.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Committee Chair Amanda Owen discussed the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) template with the committee. She clarified the goal of the committee was to finalize the FAQ document to present to the full council in January 2025. A discussion followed regarding whether the draft needed to be sent for accessibility and visual review before presenting it to the council. Administrator Nanci Howard clarified that while a draft can be submitted for feedback, the final version must be reviewed by the cabinet. The committee discussed the following sections regarding the FAQ document.

Service Provider Supporting Individuals with Disabilities:

1. What is Employment First, and how do we implement it in our services?

Answer: Employment First statute prioritizes employment as the first option for individuals with disabilities. To implement this, your services should focus on helping clients explore their interests, employment goals, providing job development, and offering ongoing support like job coaching and skills training. Employment First asserts that all individuals, including those individuals with the most significant disabilities, are capable of full participation in Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) and community life.

Committee Members' Suggestions

Susan Brown from the Coalition for Workforce Diversity discussed the importance of incorporating Employment First principles into the document. Committee members discussed using "Employment First" instead of "initiative" in the statement. This change was made in the FAQ documents. It was agreed that it was an important point to be made. The APSE definition of Employment First was used as an example. Michelle Cobb, staff support, asked if it was ok to use. Chair of the Council, Katie Wolf Whaley, said she doesn't think APSE would be opposed. A sentence was included; "Employment First "asserts" that all individuals including those with significant disabilities are capable" and discussed. "Statute" information was also included.

2. How do we ensure that individuals receive the support they need for successful employment?

Answer: Thoroughly explore each individual's strengths, needs, and interests. Provide personalized job supports, workplace accommodations, and regular follow-ups to monitor progress and adjust support as needed.

Committee Members' Suggestions

Committee member, Tracy Belfield, raised the issue of on the school end of it, it is very individualized assessments and if the committee start linking resources, individuals may think these are the only assessments. Discussion was held regarding terminology to use. Suggested language included, "conduct exploration" instead of "assessment" and "job support" instead of "job coaching". The question about follow-ups in the Vocational Rehabilitation process was discussed between Chair of the Council, Katie Wolf Whaley, and staff support, Michelle Cobb. Michelle Cobb stated counselors should definitely be doing follow ups until the consumer is 100% ready to go.

3. What is involved in providing employment supports?

Answer: Agencies typically partner with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation. Services usually include discovery (assessing the individual's skills and interests), job development (connecting with potential employers), obtaining employment, and ongoing support (initial onboarding, gaining independence and extended supports).

Committee Members' Suggestions

Committee members considered whether this question should be rephrased to focus on the different types of and different ways to provide support services rather than stages. Katie Wolf Whaley, Chair of the Council, asked Council Member, David Allgood, if someone came to CAL and wanted help finding a job what would they do as a service provider supporting people with disabilities? Mr. Allgood stated they are not doing a lot of employment and making many referrals to OVR. Katie asked if the committee wanted to address agencies that do some supported employment. There is a consensus that the document should guide providers on how to offer employment supports rather than detailing specific stages. Committee members discussed the need for clarity on eligibility for employment supports and the importance of not overwhelming potential providers with too much information. Committee suggested to reframe the question to focus on what is involved in providing employment supports, with a draft response provided to guide the discussion. The conversation moved to the inclusion of resources available for providers, emphasizing the need to guide them on where to start. The committee members discussed the potential for embedding [Link](#) to relevant resources, including vocational rehabilitation services and training programs.

4. How do we collaborate with employers to create opportunities for individuals with disabilities?

Answer: Network with local businesses and participate in business organizations, such as a local Chamber of Commerce or Coalition for Workforce Diversity. Build partnerships with local businesses or public entities, provide education on workplace accommodations and the benefits of hiring individuals with disabilities, and offer ongoing support to ensure the success of both the employer and employee.

Committee Members' Suggestions

The next question addressed collaboration with employers to create opportunities for individuals with disabilities. Committee members agreed on the importance of this question and discussed how to broaden the response to include networking with local businesses and public entities. Committee members suggested to include resources such as local Chambers of Commerce.

5. What resources are available to us as service providers?

Answer: The [Office of Vocational Rehabilitation](#) is a partner in this work. There are also supports to help agencies become a provider and learn how to offer employment supports, and a wealth of resources to support you in providing quality supports to job seekers.

Committee Members' Suggestions

Committee Chair, Amanda Owen, asked the committee what type of resources providers could receive to begin providing services. Some resources suggested were, the South ADA, UKHDI, Vocational Rehabilitation, the Employment First website resource page and, the Employment First video. The committee reviewed the resources on the website together. Committee member, Jeff Edwards, suggested thinking about case managers as they read the document as well. A link to OVR and SETP was included to the answer as well as the Employment First resource page.

Educational Professionals

1. What is Employment First, and how does it impact my work as a professional in this field?

Answer: Employment First statute prioritizes competitive integrated employment as the first option for individuals with disabilities. Education professionals can help set this expectation by ensuring inclusion throughout education and creating expectations that life after school will include employment, as it does for other students. This priority should be included the discussion around setting goals for transition into adulthood.

Committee Members' Suggestions

Committee members focused on how employment first impacts professionals in schools. Committee Chair, Amanda Owen, stated this document would be used by educators in the field and stressed the importance of clarity. Legal requirements may be asked by teachers stated Amanda Owen and said this may

be important to educators in the know what is Employment First and what are the legal requirements. Committee member, Jeff Edwards, mentioned that opportunity to become integrated begins with the school systems and the document needs to be a part of that message to ensure children are not segregated. Committee members agreed that transition should be a focus in the documents. Tracy Belfield said that transition goals are a requirement and there is focus on jobs but also focus on general life skills as well and that decision is left up to the IEP team.

2. How do I assist individuals with disabilities in preparing 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 think about how to implement key pieces of the transition process within your teaching & INSERT 5 parts of Pre ETS.

Committee Members' Suggestions

- Committee discussed Pre-ETS and the barriers faced for educators. It was suggested to include language regarding the five different Pre-ETS areas, such as, advocacy, work-based learning experiences, etc. UKHDI [checklists](#) were shared with the committee members as a resource as well as the videos entitled [Employment Files](#). There was some discussion on reaching out to KDE.
- 3. What are the requirements of the Employment First policy?**

Answer: Employment First requires prioritizing employment for individuals with disabilities in all state-funded services. This means offering integrated employment opportunities, ensuring access to job coaching, and eliminating barriers that prevent individuals from working in their communities.

Committee Members' Suggestions

It was mentioned that Allison Johnson and Jason Wheatley, who is the proxy for Gretta Hylton, has been involved with committee work. It was suggested to reach out to KDE in regard to IEP input. Larry Taylor is also a good contact to reach out to as well and also serves on the Employment First Council. Chair, Amanda Owen will consult with Larry Taylor from KATC, Allison Johnson from KDE and Jason Wheatly from KDE to refine the language regarding legal requirements, particularly concerning IPEs transition services.

4. How can I educate employers about hiring individuals with disabilities?

Answer: Provide employers with information on workplace accommodations, tax incentives, and the benefits of a diverse workforce. Offer training on disability awareness and supported employment and serve as a liaison between the employer and the individual to ensure a smooth transition.

Committee members will finish discussing the FAQ document at a later meeting in December.

Agenda Items for next meeting

- Administrator, Nanci Howard will schedule upcoming meetings before December and will send out a Doodle poll to confirm the next meeting date.
- The committee members will continue to review and add comments to the Google Doc and agreed to keep refining the FAQs document, focusing on clarity and accessibility.
- Chair, Amanda Owen will update the FAQ document based on the discussion point.
- Chair, Amanda Owen, will consult with Larry Taylor from KATC, Allison Johnson from KDE and Jason Wheatley from KDE to refine the language regarding legal requirements, particularly concerning IPEs transition services.

Closing Remarks

- The Committee members expressed gratitude for the collaborative effort and the progress made during the meeting.
- The meeting concluded with a reminder to review the document and provide additional feedback.

Adjournment

Chair, Amanda Owen and Administrator, Nanci Howard thanked everyone for their contributions and adjourned the meeting.

Next Meeting:

- **Date: December 09, 2024**
- **Time: 9:00am to 10:00am**

NEW DOCUMENT WITH CURRENT CHANGES AS OF 12/3/2024.

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4. How can I educate employers about hiring individuals with disabilities?

Answer: Provide employers with information on workplace accommodations, tax incentives, and the benefits of a diverse workforce. Offer training on disability awareness and supported employment, and serve as a liaison between the employer and the individual to ensure a smooth transition.

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

Answer: Begin by educating both the student and guardian about the employment process, opportunities, and potential challenges they might face (plans for transportation & benefits).

Offer resources such as workshops, brochures, or consultations that explain the transition from school to work.

This starts with the question of “what do you want to be when you grow up” and asking it, from a young age, as we do all students. Encouraging interests, noting skills and, broadly thinking about what a good life will be after high school.



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