



Andy Beshear  
Governor

Jamie Link  
Education & Labor Cabinet Secretary

## Advocacy and Education Committee

### Minutes

December 09, 2024

9:00am – 10:00am

[Zoom Meeting Link](#)

Meeting ID: 862 9399 6153

Passcode: 702611

#### **Attendees:**

Amanda Owen (Committee Chair)  
Jeff Edwards (Council Member)  
Morgan Turner (Council Member)  
Megan Coleman (Committee Member)  
Amanda Friend (Council Member)  
Tara Eversole (ASL Interpreter)  
David Allgood (Council Member)  
Tia Henson (ASL Interpreter)  
Nanci Howard (Vocational Rehabilitation Administrator)  
Lisa McKinney (Staff Assistant)

#### **Members Absent:**

Andrew Johnson (Council Member)  
Katie Wolf Whaley (Council Chair)  
Tracy Belfield (Additional Member)  
Susan Brown (Additional Member)

Bill Bates (Council member)

### **Welcome**

Chair, Amanda Owen welcomed everyone to the meeting. The agenda was reviewed by all participants.

### **Review FAQ Google Doc**

Committee Chair Amanda Owen discussed the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) template with the committee. She stated she would like a rough draft presented to the Council on January 10<sup>th</sup> during the quarterly meeting. She continued to state that the goal for the meeting would be to finish the Educational Professionals section as well as the Employer section of the draft.

### **Educational Professionals**

**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 interest, noting skills and, broadly thinking about what a good life will be after high school.*

#### **Committee Members' Suggestions**

Committee member, Jeff Edwards, questioned whether the group should move the second paragraph to the beginning of the answer. He explained conversations should begin regarding employment. Jeff stated conversations of “what do you want to be when you grow up?”, begin earlier than high school. He stated he believes early and repetitive conversation about employment instills that expectations in both the student and families that they can choose employment and further their education after high school.

Chair Amanda Owen asked if the committee could reference resources such as workshops, brochures, or consultations. She suggested adding website links to the Employment First website page and Vocational Rehabilitation and made a note on the FAQ document to reference those links.

### **Employers**

**1. What is Employment First, and how does it affect my hiring process?**

*Answer: Employment First encourages businesses to consider individuals with disabilities for competitive, integrated employment. As an employer, you can*

*benefit from hiring a diverse workforce, accessing tax incentives, and receiving support from employment specialists who help integrate individual into your team.*

### **Committee Members' Suggestions**

Committee member, Jeff Edwards, agreed with the language of question one. Using the language “What is Employment First?”, instead of using “What is the hiring process?”, was suggested by Jeff. He continued to say that some employers might ask “what are the benefits to my company?”. Committee Member, David Allgood agreed. It was determined by the committee to include a link to details about to benefit from hiring individuals with disabilities. Committee member, Amanda Friend, suggested linking <https://askjan.org/> as a resource.

## **2. How do I provide reasonable accommodations for employees with disabilities?**

***Answer:** Accommodations can include adjustments to work schedules, job duties, or physical workspaces. Employment specialists can help you identify and implement accommodations that allow employees to perform their job duties effectively.*

### **Committee Members' Suggestions**

Chair, Amanda Owen, stated she considered defining what a “reasonable” accommodation would be for employers. Committee member, David Allgood asked, “would it be beneficial to include that accommodations are at times no cost to you [employer] and inform them of resources available?”. Chair Amanda Owen took note of the comment.

## **3. What support will I receive if I hire someone with a disability?**

***Answer:** You will have access to job coaching service, which provide on-the-job support for both you and the employee. Job coaches work with you to ensure the employee can meet your expectations while fostering their independence.*

### **Committee Members' Suggestions**

Chair Amanda Owen asked committee members for assistance with this question as she is coming from a Supported Employment mindset. She wondered if it needs to be changed completely or removed. Committee member, Jeff Edwards, stated that he agrees with Amanda regarding the question. Megan Coleman with the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) Administrator and committee member, asked if this was only about supportive employment? Amanda Owen stated this resource trying to create is more representing anyone with a disability. She explained the idea behind the FAQ document. Megan stated and said not everyone who has a disability will have a job coach. Amanda Owen stated she agreed and needs to be all inclusive. Amanda Friend said that a lot of times individuals with disabilities go out and find jobs on their own, so how does the

committee explain that? Chair, Amanda Owen, agreed and reiterated the need to change the question. Committee member, Megan Coleman, stated instead of the question stating, “what support will I receive...” that maybe it could state, “what support is available...?” She suggested linking some of those resources in the document.

#### **4. What are the benefits of hiring individuals with disabilities?**

*Answer: Hiring individuals with disabilities can enhance workplace diversity, increase productivity, and improve employee morale. Additionally, you may qualify for tax credits such as the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) for hiring individuals from certain target groups. Including people with disabilities.*

#### **Committee Members' Suggestions**

Committee agrees to keep this FAQ and answer stated as is.

#### **5. How do I ensure a smooth transition for an employee with a disability?**

*Answer: Work closely with the supported employment team to understand the employee's needs and strengths. Provide clear communication, reasonable accommodations, and ongoing feedback. The employment specialist will help ensure the employee is fully integrated into your workforce.*

#### **Committee Members' Suggestions**

The Committee changed the answer to the following:

- *Provide clear communication, reasonable accommodations, and ongoing feedback. Work closely with the supported employment team to understand the employee's needs and strengths. Employment Services could be a reasonable accommodation through OVR if the needs is there to support retentions and success long-term.*

The committee agreed to send the rough draft to Executive Committee for approval to send to the full council meeting on January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2025. No discussion. She encouraged members to continue to use the Google Doc to include resources and link to them in comments.

#### **Next Steps:**

- Send the FAQ document to Executive committee for review and approval prior sending to full council meeting on January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2025.

#### **Adjournment**

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

**Next Meeting:**  
TBD

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