

Employment First: Frequently Asked Questions

Disability Service Providers

[Kentucky Employment First law](#) states that “The General Assembly finds and declares that it is the policy of the Commonwealth of Kentucky that competitive integrated employment shall be considered the first and primary option for persons with disabilities of working age who desire to become employed.” You can [learn what Employment First means to Kentuckians](#) in this short video.

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

Answer: Kentucky’s Employment First law prioritizes employment as the first option for individuals with disabilities who want to go to work. To implement this, your services should focus on sharing the possibility of finding a job with everyone you serve and ensuring appropriate goals and plans are set. You may offer employment services or connect people to agencies that provide this direct service. The important thing is to know that Employment First asserts that all individuals, including those with the most significant disabilities, are capable of obtaining competitive integrated employment and should have access to do so if they so choose.

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

Answer: First, employment should be a stated goal for everyone interested in having a job. Typically, employment supports begin with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, and you can [help someone get a VR appointment](#) to begin the process. It is important that each person’s strengths, interests, and support needs are thoroughly explored. This information should direct each person’s job search, orientation and training, connections to natural supports and other accommodations, plus how you may offer support over time. If your agency provides employment supports, they can ask to be referred to you for this service. If you do not, they will be connected with an employment provider in your area. Since you know the people you support well, whether offered by you or another agency, be sure to offer insight in the job search process to help them be successful.

What is involved in providing employment services?

Answer: Agencies typically partner with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation. There are several vocational services you can provide through this partnership. [Pre-Vocational Services](#) may be helpful for some needing additional skills before going to work. Supported

employment helps someone get a job and consists of: discovery (assessing the individual's skills, interests, and support needs), job development (connecting with potential employers), obtaining employment, and ongoing support (initial onboarding, gaining independence, and extended support). [You can learn how to apply to become an OVR provider](#). UK - HDI's [Supported Employment Training Project](#) offers free training and support to help your staff learn how to do this work well.

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

Answer: Network with local businesses and participate in business organizations. Build partnerships with local businesses or public entities to learn their hiring needs, provide education on workplace accommodations, and the benefits of hiring people with disabilities. This ongoing partnership offers both the employer and the employee potential support needed to maintain success. Some parts of the state have a [Coalition Forward](#) that connects employers and service providers. In Owensboro, the local Chamber partners with the [Inclusive Workforce Coalition](#) around disability and employment. Remember, you should be a critical partner in workforce development in your area, so find local opportunities and connect.

What resources are available to us as service providers?

Answer: There are many ways to get help to provide high-quality employment support. The [Office of Vocational Rehabilitation](#) is a partner in this work, and the [Supported Employment Training Project](#) offers resources, training, and technical assistance to answer your questions and help you support people well. This [quick video on Employment First](#) lists additional resources to help you and the business community increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities.