

Employment First: Frequently Asked Questions

Education Professionals

[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?

Answer: Employment First law sets competitive integrated employment as the first and preferred option for Kentuckians with disabilities who desire to become employed. 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 in discussions around setting goals for transition into adulthood.

How do I assist students with disabilities prepare for employment?

Answer: You can assist by conducting assessments of their skills and interests, 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.

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

Answer: Employment First requires prioritizing employment for individuals with disabilities. As an 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](#)

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 Admissions and Release Committee (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 employment supports as needed, and eliminating barriers that prevent individuals from working in their communities. The transition present levels section within the Individualized Education Program (IEP) should highlight students' 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 [Supported Employment success stories](#)

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