

Employer Education and Engagement Committee

Minutes

June 11th, 2025

1:00pm – 2:00pm (EST)

Attendees: Chair, Merry Reid Sheffer, Rebecca Becky Wilson,

Staff Attendees: Nanci Howard, Kentucky Office of Rehabilitation (KYOVR) Administrator, and Betty Whittaker, KYOVR Staff Assistant.

Members Absent: Dawn Gardner and Jessica Beaven, Katie Wolf Whaley, Todd Coffey, Amanda Hutchison, Kimberly Wickert, Zachary Sappenfield, and Aaron Poynter.

Guests Present: Bev Harp, Innovative Supports for Autistic Workers (ISAW).

Staff Absent: Kristen Beach and Deana Wilson-Kimble

Welcome: Employment First Committee Chair, Merry Reid Sheffer welcomed everyone to the meeting. The agenda was reviewed by all participants.

Job Accommodation Network (JAN) Employer Handbook Discussion:

It was suggested using the JAN Employer Handbook as a tool for the committee to repurpose and use to educate employers through the work of the committee. No further discussion was held.

Innovative Supports for Autistic Workers (ISAW):

Bev Harp of the ISAW project provided a brief presentation to committee members and discussed ways on how the Employer Education and Engagement Committee could support the program's efforts. Bev shared a [link](#) to the ISAW curriculum and resources, noting that the training is open to anyone interested in learning more about ISAW. Bev proposed that the Employment First Council

could assist by developing promotional videos to help educate employers. One suggestion was to present three themed promotional videos per quarter, each followed by a 10-minute discussion to address employer questions. The committee also discussed surveying employers by utilizing the SurveyMonkey platform in advance to identify questions employers would like addressed in the videos. The RETAIN Kentucky list serv and collaboration with the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce were identified as potential resources for outreach and distribution.

2025 Annual Report Recommendations:

It was recommended highlighting committee collaboration with the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce in support of ISAW promotional videos, as well as exploring potential partnership opportunities with the Coalition for Workforce Diversity.

Additional Discussion:

Chair, Marry Reid Sheffer reported on a meeting with Laurie Mays from the Kentucky Chamber held on April 3rd, 2025, during which she offered the committee's expertise to support the upcoming Disability Hiring Academy. The academy is scheduled for February or March 2026, with planning set to begin in August 2025. Laurie Mays is expected to reach out in early 2026 to initiate collaboration, which will include reviewing materials, providing input, and introducing job candidates with disabilities to serve as learning partners in the academy. Callie Miracle from the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce is scheduled to present at the Employment First Council quarterly meeting on July 11th, 2025, at 1:00pm (EST). Chair, Merry Reid-Sheffer, stated she would reach back out to Kitty Zachery and Susan Brown to see if Employment First can amplify their efforts as well.

KYOVR Administrator, Nanci Howard discussed the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) document being developed by the Advocacy and Education Committee. She noted that all committee members had the opportunity to provide feedback.

Action Items:

- Bring stakeholders together to discuss promotional videos and trainings for ISAW.
- Utilize the Employment First Council website as a resource for outreach of promotional materials for ISAW and other organizations working together with the committee.
- Utilize SurveyMonkey to gather employer feedback to prepare for collaborative efforts.
- To expand efforts beyond the Employer Education and Engagement committee to include the Coalition for Workforce Diversity and the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce.
- The ISAW project will become a standing item on future committee agendas.
- Invite Bev Harp, Susan Brown, Kitty Zachery, and Callie Miracle to the next Employer Education and Engagement Committee meeting on July 9th, 2025, at 1:00pm (EST).

Public Comment

No public comment addressed.

Adjournment

Chair, Merry Reid Sheffer thanked everyone for their contribution and adjourned the meeting.

Next Meeting

Date: July 9th, 2025

Time: 1:00pm to 2:00pm

Nanci Howard

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