

Kentucky Employment First Council

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Andy Beshear

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Jamie Link

Secretary, Education and Labor Cabinet

Employment First Council Employer Education and Engagement Committee Meeting Minutes

November 12, 2025
1:00 pm – 2:00 pm (EST)
Zoom
Meeting ID: 851 4762 5002

Members Present

Chair Merry Reid Sheffer, Melissa Marvel, Amanda Hutchinson

Members Absent

Council Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley, Becky Wilson, Aaron Poynter, Zachery Sappenfield

Staff Present

Nanci Howard, Anu Kumari, Betty Whittaker, and Deana Wilson-Kimbler

Staff Absent

Kristen Beach

Guest(s) Present

Bev Harp, Innovative Supports for Autistic Workers (ISAW), Terry Madden, and Dawn Rollins

Welcome | Agenda Review:

Employment First Committee Chair, Merry Reid Sheffer, welcomed attendees. The agenda was reviewed and acknowledged by all participants.

ISAW Update and Discussion

The committee continues its collaboration with the University of Kentucky Human Development Institute (HDI) through the Innovative Supports for Autistic Workers (ISAW) initiative. This project aims to release a monthly two-minute employer-focused video followed by a quarterly workshop to promote inclusive hiring and workplace practices.

Next Steps with ISAW- Action Items

Series 1: "Hiring"

The updated schedule is as follows:

- Video 1: November 19, 2025
- Video 2: December 17, 2025
- Video 3: January 14, 2026

Workshop (Live Session)

- Proposed date: February 11, 2026 or February 18, 2026 (*TBD; awaiting input from Council Chair Katie Wolf Whaley*)

Workshop Preparation

- Develop the quarterly workshop registration form.
- Create the workshop feedback survey in Qualtrics

Communications & Outreach

- Bev Harp will prepare the email copy accompanying each video in the series.
- Distribute the emails through the HDI/UK listserv (primary send platform)
- Send communications to the *Community Rehabilitation Program* (CRP) list and *RETA/N* attendee list.
- Send workshop notifications to the following networks:
 - *Chambers of Commerce* (Louisville and Lexington)
 - *Coalition for Workforce Diversity* (CWD)
 - *Society for Human Resource Management* (SHRM)

- *Louisville Independent Business Alliance (LIBA)*
- Committee members will also forward additional employer contact emails to Chair Merry Reid Sheffer to include in the distribution list.

Interpreter Accommodations:

- Secure ASL interpreting services by January 16, 2026, as needed, based on registration responses, and the committee will coordinate with OVR staff.

Other Focus Items:

- Bev Harp will share the master plan; all committee members will provide feedback via email.
- Bev Harp will design a leave-behind resource (print or digital) for the video series and workshop promotion.

2026 Meeting Dates Discussion

The committee agreed to continue holding monthly meetings to maintain project momentum. The Administrator will schedule 2026 meeting dates. Members were encouraged to invite colleagues and other potential collaborators to participate in future committee meetings.

Public Comments

The Kentucky APSE Conference is scheduled for December 8–9, 2025, in Elizabethtown, KY

Adjournment

Employment First Committee Chair Merry Reid Shaffer thanked everyone for their contribution and adjourned the meeting.

Next Meeting Date

- December 10, 2025
- 1:00 pm- 2:00 pm (EST)