



Kentucky Employment First Council
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Andy Beshear
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Jamie Link
Secretary, Education and Labor Cabinet

Employment First Council Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

December 18, 2025
3:00pm – 4:00pm (EST)
Zoom
Meeting ID: 813 3637 2992

Members Present

Katie Wolf Whaley, Jeff White, Merry Reid Sheffer, and Tal Curry

Members Absent

Amanda Owen

Staff Present

Nanci Howard and Anu Kumari

Welcome | Agenda Review:

Employment First Council Chair Katie Wolf Whaley welcomed attendees and officially called the meeting to order.

Appointment Update

An update was provided regarding recent council appointments. A total of twenty (20) appointments were initially made, with one subsequent resignation, resulting in nineteen (19) current council members.

The current council membership includes:

- Two (2) continuing members
- Eight (8) newly appointed members
- Ten (10) reappointed members

In addition, it was noted for context that eight (8) individuals were not appointed. Newly appointed and reappointed members will receive a formal welcome communication, along with approved council documents and meeting information. Orientation will be scheduled and conducted after the January 9th quarterly meeting. New and returning members will be listed on the introductory slides and shown prior to the start of the quarterly meeting in January.

Elections Discussion

The committee discussed the election process as officer terms conclude at the end of the current council term. In accordance with the council's bylaws and governing procedures, elections will be held at the January 9, 2026, council meeting.

Positions in the election include:

- Chair,
- Vice Chair,
- Legislative Liaison, and
- Committee Chairs.

Members may self-nominate or be nominated during the meeting. Current officers will continue to serve until elections are completed, and newly elected officers will assume their roles following the election process. All elections will be conducted in accordance with Robert's Rules of Order, as outlined in the council's bylaws.

Committee Reports

Advocacy And Education Committee

On behalf of the Advocacy & Education Committee, Council Chair Katie Wolf Whaley reported on the committee meeting focused on the dissemination of the Employment First Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), both as a comprehensive document and as audience-specific materials.

Employer Education and Engagement Committee

Merry Reid Sheffer, Chair of the Employer Education & Engagement Committee, provided an update on the committee's work. The committee reported progress on a new partnership with Innovative Supports for Autistic Workers (ISAW) to launch an employer-focused education initiative beginning in January 2026.

The initiative will include:

- Monthly email communications featuring brief, two-minute educational videos focused on autism and employment
- Quarterly virtual employer gatherings to support learning, discussion, and topic development.

This initiative is intended to build on prior employer engagement efforts and expand outreach through partner networks and social media channels. No action items or votes were requested at this time.

Public Policy Committee

No report was addressed.

Provider Capacity Committee

Jeff White, Chair of the Provider Capacity Committee, provided an update on the committee's work and reported progress on the development of a webinar planned for 2026. Committee members confirmed that the webinar content has largely been prepared; however, scheduling will be deferred until an approved presentation template is obtained.

It was noted for a co-branded, accessible presentation template that aligns with Employment First Council and Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) branding requirements. Accessibility considerations will be addressed prior to finalizing the webinar materials. Once the appropriate template is received and approvals are confirmed, the committee will proceed with final formatting and scheduling.

Transition Committee

No report was addressed.

Annual Report Update

The report is currently under external review, and the agency is awaiting approval.

Finalized Agenda for January 09, 2026, Quarterly Meeting

The following agenda was finalized by the Employment First Council Executive Committee.

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|--------|---|---|
| 1:00pm | Welcome/Staff Report | Nanci Howard, OVR Administrator |
| 1:05pm | Roll Call | Anu Kumari, Admin. Spec. Senior |
| 1:15pm | Recognition of New Membership | Katie Wolf Whaley, Chair |
| 1:20pm | Approval of October 10, 2025 Minutes | Katie Wolf Whaley, Chair |
| 1:25pm | Chair Report | Katie Wolf Whaley, Chair |
| 1:35pm | Autism Works Study Presentation | Lori Norton, Council Member |
| 1:45pm | Training Innovation Project (TIP) – Employer Engagement Strategies | Kathy Sheppard-Jones, UKHDI Project Director |
| 1:55pm | Committee Reports/Recommendations <i>Advocacy and Education – Amanda Owen</i> <i>Employer Education and Engagement – Merry Reid Sheffer</i> <i>Provider Capacity – Jeff White</i> <i>Public Policy –Interim Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley</i> <i>Transition – Tal Curry</i> | Committee Chairs |
| 2:25pm | Employment First Council Elections <i>Council Officers</i> <i>Chair, Vice-Chair, and Legislative Liaison</i> <i>Committee Chairs</i> | Council Members |
| 2:50pm | Public Comment | Guest(s) |
| 3:00pm | Motion to Adjourn | New Council Chair |

Announcement

An announcement was shared regarding Edge of Employment's recent submission of a memorandum of acceptance with Bullitt County Public Schools to begin providing Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) during school hours. With this addition, services will now be available in Oldham County, Bullitt County, and Jefferson County. The program will support students *ages 14 to 21* with disabilities through career exploration, workplace readiness, and related services. Additional details regarding participating schools will be shared as they become available.

Public Comment

None.

Adjournment

Employment First Council Chair Katie Wolf Whaley thanked everyone for their contribution and adjourned the meeting.

Next Meeting Date

TBD (To be determined)