



Kentucky Employment First Executive Committee Meeting

Minutes

August 8th, 2025

1:00 pm – 2:00 pm (EST)

Chair Member Present:

Katie Wolf Whaley, Employment First Council Chair and Public Policy Committee Interim Chair

Morgan Turner, Vice-Chair

Amanda Owen, Advocacy and Education Chair

Merry Reid Sheffer, Employer Education and Engagement Committee Chair

Jeff White, Provider Capacity Committee Chair

Tal Curry, Transition Committee Chair

Staff Present:

Nanci Howard, Vocational Rehabilitation Administrator

Anu Kumari, KYOVR Administrative Specialist Senior

Welcome:

Employment First Council Chair Katie Wolf Whaley welcomed attendees and officially called the meeting to order. The agenda was reviewed by all participants.

Discussion of Certificates of Appreciation:

The Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation's Administrative Specialist Senior, Anu Kumari, drafted a Certificate of Appreciation to recognize departing Employment First Council members.

The certificate, which includes the Council Chair's signature, will be printed on high-quality paper, professionally framed, and presented to the members. Council members reviewed and approved the design, expressing unanimous support with no objections.

Annual Report Brainstorming Presentation and Discussion:

The Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Administrator, Nanci Howard, presented the 2025 Annual Report brainstorming session, outlining objectives, timelines, key considerations, the report framework, main content, potential enhancements, and each committee-specific recommendation.

Key Deadlines:

- Mid-July – Preparation and planning for the annual report
- Early August – Brainstorming session with the Executive Committee (EC)
- Early September – Progress check with EC
- Late September – Completion of report draft
- September 30 – Draft report sent with meeting materials to the full Council
- October 10 – Presentation to the full Council for review and potential motion to approve
- October 13 – Move through appropriate Cabinet channels for review and/or edits
- December 1 – Final report on the Governor's desk

Items to include in the annual report:

Employer Education and Engagement Committee:

- Chair Merry Reid Sheffer presented to the Louisville Society for Human Resource Management on Customized Employment: A Strategy for Engaging Hidden *Workers* on July 8, 2025.
- In 2024, Chair Merry Reid Sheffer and Employed Self-Advocate Graham Maupin presented on Customized Employment and Employment First initiatives with ODEP and Econsys at the TASH Conference in New Orleans, LA.
- Chair Merry Reid Sheffer is scheduled to present on the State Activities to Fund and Support Customized Employment panel at the Customized Employment Symposium hosted by Econsys in Denver, CO, on August 26, 2025.
- Coalition Forward and the Coalition for Workforce Diversity were mentioned as potential partnerships. Northeast Kentucky Workforce Development Conference (*Morgan Turner, Vice Chair, and Katie Wolf Whaley, Council chair designed for or focused on employers.*

Provider Capacity Committee:

- Caroline Wheeler and Jeff White presented at least 10 different sessions on DB101, focusing on the impact of wages on benefits.
- The Provider Capacity Committee has had initial discussions regarding the development of a training series geared towards exploring alternative funding sources.
- New SETP staff were hired at the direction of previous councils in an attempt to increase provider capacity across the state.

Transition Services:

- The Department of Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities', Office of Autism has incorporated Employment First principles into their strategic plan.

Ms. Howard encouraged the committee chairs to review their recommendations and provide feedback. She will share the brainstorming presentation with committee members to facilitate their review and gather additional input. The committee will continue its discussion at the next meeting.

Public Comment:

No Public comment addressed.

Adjournment:

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

Next Meeting

Date: September 12th, 2025.

Time: 8:00 am to 9:00 am (EST)

Nanci Howard

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