



**Kentucky Employment First Council**

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**Andy Beshear**

Governor

**Jamie Link**

Secretary, Education and Labor Cabinet

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## Employment First Council Executive Committee Minutes

September 13, 2024

3:00pm – 4:00pm (EST)

Zoom

Meeting ID: 860 9565 2365

### Members Present

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Merry Reid Sheffer, Amanda Owen, Jeff White, Katie Wolf Whaley, Frank Huffman, Morgan Turner, and Diana Merzweiler

### Members Absent

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Jessica Beaven and Amanda Owen

### Staff Present

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Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (KYOVR) Administrator, Nanci Howard and Administrative Specialist Senior, Anu Kumari

### Staff Absent

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N/A

### Guest(s) Present

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N/A

## Welcome, Introductions and Agenda Review

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Council Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley, welcomed everyone to the meeting. Katie officially called the meeting to order, confirming that they had a quorum for the Executive Committee. She outlined the agenda, which included discussing the upcoming Annual Report and content from each committee.

## 1915 (c) Waiver Public Comments

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Council Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley shared a letter that was drafted regarding the amendments to the 1915(c) waivers. She reminded committee members that the Public Policy Committee had discussed submitting comments on behalf of the council. She began reading the letter emphasizing the importance of supported employment services to help participants gain employment in their local communities. They also highlighted the importance of individualized services to prevent job loss and alleviate the strain on service providers. Katie concluded the reading of the letter and invited thoughts, questions, or comments from the committee members.

Committee Chair, Jeff White highlighted that the content aligns with previous discussions in the Public Policy Committee and other committees. Mr. White commented on the eloquence of the letter and mentioned additional recommendations made by their department regarding the definition of competitive integrated employment and the need to consolidate regulatory requirements across waivers.

Council Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley agreed on the importance of including the definition of competitive integrated employment in the comments.

## Regulatory Requirements and Rate Structures

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Discussion continued regarding the regulatory requirements and rate structures for waivers, including the differences in rates across waivers. Committee Co-Chair, Frank, raised a question about the status of comments on the new service fee memorandum and expressed concern about the impact on Employment First. Katie clarified that the comments pertain to all waivers, including supports for community living, and discussed the differences in rates across waivers. She provided specific figures for supported employment rates and highlighted the differences between the different waivers. She noted that the ABI waiver rates are significantly lower than those of the SCL waiver, prompting the request for rate increases to ensure consistency. Frank expressed appreciation for the information shared. Committee members discussed the potential for comparing rates with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) and the

implications of the changes on providers. They emphasized the need for increased financial investment in supported employment services. Committee member, Jeff White, mentioned the expected increase in the OVR supported employment rate and the need for Medicaid to increase its funding for supported employment services. He then discussed the need for the letter to reflect the definition of competitive integrated employment as outlined in Kentucky statute. Council chair, Katie Wolf Whaley encouraged further discussion on the topic and noted that the council bylaws allow the committee to approve comments without full council approval, emphasizing that the topics discussed have been previously addressed in committee meetings.

Katie called for a vote on the approval of the letter as read and revised. Merry Reid Sheffer made the motion. Morgan Turner, second. Those in favor were:

- ✓ Morgan Turner
- ✓ Diana Merzweiler
- ✓ Merry Reid Sheffer
- ✓ Jeff White
- ✓ Frank Huffman

No further discussion or opposition. The vote passed.

The letter will be submitted to Medicaid before the deadline of Friday, September 13, 2024, by midnight. Katie confirmed the approval and discussed the logistics of sending the letter for the comments. She expressed gratitude for the collaboration in drafting the comments and acknowledged the contributions of all involved.

## **Agenda for next Quarterly Council meeting/Provider Capacity**

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Council Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley shifted her focus to the agenda for the upcoming full council meeting on October 11th. She announced the meeting will be offered in a hybrid format with a Zoom option with an in-person option held at the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet, 200 Mero Street, Frankfort, KY from 1:00pm to 3:00pm (EST).

Council Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley said that during the October 11th meeting, she would provide the Chair report and then have the Council approve the July 12th meeting minutes. She stated there will be two council members to present at the October 11th full council meeting. Jason Wheatley, from the Kentucky Department of Education and Lori Norton of the IPS program will provide presentations on how their respective agencies are incorporating Employment First. She then said the council will focus on committee reports and the annual report. The annual report deadline has a deadline of December 1st and mentioned that a draft report would be sent to the Kentucky Education and Labor Cabinet prior to the date of November 1st, for their approval and

review to meet the deadline of December 1st. She invited thoughts, questions, or comments from the committee members.

Jeff White addressed the potential for a discussion on provider capacity and the impact of changes in the fee structure. He suggested inviting OVR staff to provide an overview of the changes in the fee structure and their implications for provider capacity. Katie acknowledged the importance of keeping council members informed about these changes. Mr. White highlighted the importance of effectively communicating these changes to the council and ensuring members understand the implications for provider capacity. Katie expressed a preference for a concise overview rather than extensive details. It was acknowledged that many provider requests had already been addressed, and it is crucial to communicate this clearly at the upcoming meeting. The implications of these changes on provider capacity were seen as significant, potentially serving as a game changer in the field.

## **Annual Report Preparation**

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OVR Administrator, Nanci Howard, presented a draft Annual Report to the committee. She shared a sample and stated it was categorized by the four charges of the Council. She encouraged committee members to submit their committee recommendations and action items to herself on October 1st. The importance of gathering feedback and data from various initiatives, such as the employer seminar series, was emphasized to enhance the report's impact. The timeline for finalizing the report was outlined, with a goal to submit a draft to the Education and Labor Cabinet by November 1st, 2024. The report will then be sent to the Secretary of the Education and Labor Cabinet, the Legislative Research Commission, and the Governor, on December 1, as per KRS 151B.211-214.

Nanci highlighted that the Annual Report would include an introductory memorandum summarizing the council's activities and accomplishments, along with a letter from the Chair, which was absent in the previous year's report. The structure of the report was discussed, with emphasis on the need for concise narratives for each charge, focusing on shorter sections compared to last year's lengthy report. The report will address the council's charges, with specific attention to training and resources developed, such as the Employer Seminar Series. Future steps for each charge will also be included, prompting committee members to think about their goals moving forward.

## Outreach Materials for Employment First Council

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Administrator, Nanci Howard announced the availability of outreach materials for Employment First, including a floor banner, tabletop banner, and tablecloth and checkout system for these materials is being developed to facilitate their use by council members for promoting Employment First initiatives.

## Training of New Direct Service Providers (DSPs)

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Transition Committee Co- Chair, Frank Huffman, suggested adding a point about the training requirements for DSPs regarding supported employment, highlighting the lack of understanding among some staff about the service. Katie acknowledged the importance of training requirements for DSPs regarding supported employment and this is something the council will investigate in 2025. Jeff White took initiative during the committee meeting to contact the College of Direct Supports to help answer Frank's question. Jeff said they are unsure but referred him to someone else for assistance. He said he would follow up with the suggested contact person. Katie also suggested following up on the training topic in future meetings.

A motion was made by Jeff White to adjourn the meeting. Morgan Turner, second. Motion carried.

## Next Steps

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Council Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley confirmed the date for the next Full Council meeting as October 11th, 2024, from 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM Eastern Time.

Council Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley encouraged committee members to review the draft Annual Report and provide feedback before the October 1st, 2024, deadline.

## Upcoming Meeting Dates

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### *Executive Committee Meeting Date*

December 19, 2024 – 3:00pm – 4:00pm (EST)