



**Andy Beshear**  
Governor

**Jaime Link**  
Education and Labor Cabinet Secretary

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## **Employment First Full Council Quarterly Meeting** **Minutes**

April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023  
01:00pm – 03:00pm  
Zoom  
Meeting ID: 832 1299 2325

**Members Present:** Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley, Co-Chair, Frank Huffman, Legislative Liaison, Annette Jett, Lori Norton, Jeff White, Staci Cain, Todd Coffey, Diana Merzweiler, Tal Curry, Amanda Owen, Dina Klimkina, Jeff Edwards, Merry Reid Sheffer, Rebecca Wilson, Zach Morgan, Amanda Friend, David Allgood, Leslie Hoffman

**Members Absent:** Dawn Gardner, Cora McNabb, Gretta Hylton, Michael Rimer, Morgan Turner, Larry Taylor, Jessica Beaven was not present for roll call but attended later in the meeting.

**Staff Present:** Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (KYOVR) Administrator, Nanci Howard, KYOVR Administrative Specialist, Pepper Caudill, KYOVR Assistant Director, Kristen Beach, KYOVR Manager, Deana Wilson-Kimble, KYOVR Manager, Michelle Cobb, KYOVR Manager, Ron O'Hair, KYOVR Staff Assistant, Betty Whittaker, KYOVR Manager, Dorothy Jenkins on behalf of Veronica Dale, KYOVR Division Director, Holly Hendricks

**Staff Absent:** KYOVR Assistant Director, Jonathan White, KYOVR Manager, Veronica Dale

**Guest(s) Present:** Karen Lee, Tonika East, Luv'Tesha Robertson, Johnny Collett, Melanie Tyner-Wilson, Justin Jeter and Johnny Callebs attended on behalf of Patricia Seybold, Kellie Smith, Jason Wheatley on behalf of Gretta Hylton

### **Welcome, Introductions and Agenda Review:**

Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley welcomed all attendees to the meeting and a roll call was taken to establish quorum. Katie held introductions for guests in attendance of the meeting, made mention of the meeting materials packet and Dropbox link(s) and called for a motion to be brought forth to approve the December 2, 2022, Quarterly Meeting Minutes. **Member, David Allgood made the motion to approve the December 2, 2022, Quarterly Meeting Minutes and a second was provided by member, Rebecca Wilson. A vote was taken, and all were in favor except member, Jessica Beaven and Member, Dina Klimkina could not be counted as they were unable to maintain video connection during the meeting. The motion passed.** Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley called for a

motion to be brought forth to approve the January 30, 2023, Special Meeting Minutes. **Member, David Allgood made the motion to approve the January 30, 2023, Special Meeting Minutes. Member, Todd Coffey provided a second to this motion. A vote was taken, and all were in favor except Member, Jessica Beaven and Member, Dina Klimkina could not be counted as they were unable to maintain video connection during the meeting. The motion passed.** Administrator, Nanci Howard presented the KYOVR Staff Report to the council. This report included details such as proper etiquette for conducting the hybrid meeting as well as rules pertaining to camera and audio connections for all members in virtual attendance. Nanci provided a brief overview of her work in affiliated committees and professional development trainings in which she encouraged other members in attendance to consider enrolling themselves.

#### **Chair Report:**

Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley presented the Chair report utilizing a Power Point Presentation that was presented to onsite members in attendance of the meeting. Due to technical difficulties, online participants were unable to view the slides. In the presentation, Katie explained the mission of the Employment First Council, its charge as defined in five parts, its priorities defined as cross agency collaboration and policy informs, as well as the Kentucky 2023 Disability Compendium statistics. She provided an overview about the Employment First website and the redirect from its former platform. (The power point presentation has been added to this report as a reference of what was discussed therein.)

#### **National Expansion of Employment Opportunities Network (NEON) Presentation:**

Subject Matter Expert, Karen Lee presented the NEON report utilizing a Power Point Presentation that was presented to all members in attendance of the meeting. She provided a historical record of the Employment First project and its evolution. Karen gave an account of her professional background. She provided an explanation of the NEON program in a four-year breakdown format. Karen provided a percentage breakdown of hours and explanation of work the NEON program will extend to the Employment First Council. She went on to explain the Council leadership outcomes and best practice goals of the NEON program. She also discussed the importance of Public Policy and negotiation of changes that may be remediated over the coming months. Upon conclusion of the NEON Power Point Presentation, discussion was held amongst attendees regarding the presentation and Karen provided additional information and answered questions during this period. (The power point presentation has been added to this report as a reference of what was discussed therein.) Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley requested that a motion be brought forth to deem the members that had been attending the bi-weekly NEON meeting, the official Public Policy Committee of the Employment First Council. **Member, Leslie Hoffman made the motion to officially name the members of the bi-weekly NEON meeting the Public Policy Committee of the Employment First Council. Member, Jeff White provided a second to the motion. There was a call for discussion. A vote was taken, and all were in favor except Member, Jessica Beaven and Member, Dina Klimkina could not be counted as they were unable to maintain video connection during the meeting. The motion passed.**

#### **Subcommittee Presentation(s)/Discussion(s):**

**Transition Committee:** Chair, Jessica Beaven was not present and Co-Chair, Frank Huffman made the presentation on behalf of the committee. He stated that the committee is proposing creation of a Facebook page where all information could be held in a single location. Member, Diana Merzweiler spoke as a member of the Transition Committee and provided a recommendation for the Council to endorse an outreach campaign. There was discussion between Diana and Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley regarding the Employment First Website and improvements that are needed. Diana asked whether KYOVR had a designated marketing/media representative and KYOVR Division Director, Holly

Hendricks answered this query explaining that although there is not a designated employee for marketing and media, KYOVR coordinated with the Education and Labor Cabinet on these matters. Diana provided additional comments regarding partnerships and there was discussion held amongst council and guests regarding this matter. Chair, Jessica Beaven provided commentary during this period however she could not be viewed on the screen as her camera was turned off.

**Advocacy & Education Committee:** Chair, Amanda Owen proposed the committee's first request to create and distribute a master Power Point Presentation that would be branded with the Employment First logo. This Power Point Presentation will contain all the subdivided information to allow for ease of access, distribution and consistency for trainers, employers, providers, and others, alike. Amanda went on to propose the committee's second request to conduct a feasibility study for a multimedia landing site. This would include information regarding the development an all-inclusive App that the committee is hoping to see come forth in the coming years. Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley requested that a motion be brought forth for the Advocacy & Education Committee in collaboration with other Council members, create a branded slide deck of Employment First talking points that could be used by others, when they share information. **Member, David Allgood made the motion for the Advocacy & Education Committee in collaboration with other Council members, to create a branded slide deck of Employment First talking points that could be used by others, when they share information. Member, Merry Reid Sheffer provided a second to the motion. There was call for discussion. A vote was taken, and all were in favor except Member, Jessica Beaven and Member, Dina Klimkina could not be counted as they were unable to maintain video connection during the meeting. The motion passed.** Guest, Karen Lee provided recommendations to the Council regarding Committee Charters. Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley requested that a motion be brought forth for the Advocacy & Education Committee to research details of a landing page, platform, App, Hub or similar, to be created, maintained, etc. Member, Jeff White clarified that this would be a "feasibility study". There was discussion amongst council members regarding the verbiage and intent of the Advocacy & Education Committee's second motion. **Member, Jeff White made the motion for the Advocacy & Education Committee to conduct a feasibility study for creation of a multimedia landing site. Member, Dina Klimkina provided a second to the motion. She could be viewed on screen as well as heard on audio. There was call for discussion. A vote was taken, and all were in favor. However, because Dina could not maintain video connection throughout the entire meeting, she had been counted as a non-participant and therefore her vote was unable to be counted. Because the vote was unanimous, Legal stated the following "...it can be presumed that one of the on camera members would have seconded the motion and the vote can stand as is."** Therefore, the motion passed. Jessica Beaven also could not be counted as she was unable to maintain video connection during the meeting.

**Employer Education & Engagement Committee:** Chair, Merry Reid Sheffer presented a Power Point Presentation that was presented to all members in attendance of the meeting. This presentation included two main action items. First action item presented was a landing page for Employment First Materials to be contained. It was discussed amongst council that this idea is one that had already been brought forward by other committee(s) and therefore a vote was not needed for this action item. Second action item presented was an Employer Lunch & Learn Series to be conducted by the committee. During the presentation, Merry provided further details of the proposed series training points. There was discussion amongst council and guests regarding the schedule of the proposed series and further collaboration of partnerships to conduct the series. Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley requested that a motion be brought forth for the Employer Education & Engagement Committee to create a Lunch & Learn Series. **Member, Jeff Edwards made the motion for the Employer Education & Engagement Committee to create a Lunch & Learn Series. Member, Annette Jett**

provided a second to the motion. There was a call for discussion. A vote was taken and all were in favor except Member, Jessica Beaven and Member, Dina Klimkina could not be counted as they were unable to maintain video connection during the meeting. The motion passed.

**Provider Capacity Committee:** Chair, Jeff White presented an infographic to the council for approval of the Employment First branding and subsequent distribution of the material to public sources. This infographic would provide a single pager resource to encourage employment seeking amongst people with disabilities. Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley requested that a motion be brought forth for the Provider Capacity Committee to band the infographic with the Employment First logo and distribute to public sources. **Member, David Allgood made the motion for the Provider Capacity Committee to band the infographic with the Employment First logo and distribute to public sources. Member, Todd Coffey provided a second to the motion. There was a call for discussion. A vote was taken and all were in favor except Member, Jessica Beaven and Member, Dina Klimkina could not be counted as they were unable to maintain video connection during the meeting. The motion passed.**

**Bylaws (Adhoc) Committee:** Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley gave a brief update on the bylaws draft and expected future date in which the bylaws would be finalized and brought to the Council for review and vote. It was stated that the final draft is expected to be submitted to legal and approved for council members review before the next quarterly meeting scheduled on July 14, 2023.

**Additional Commentary:** Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley closed the meeting with a request that any guests wishing to join Employment First Committees to reach out to share their contact information with Administrator, Nanci Howard or Administrative Specialist, Pepper Caudill so that they may be added to the invitation lists of the committees. Katie also reminded everyone that the meeting schedules are posted on the KYOVR website.

Guest, Johnny Collett mentioned that September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2023, is the Statewide Inclusive Workforce Summit in Kentucky. He went on to give further details of the event. Johnny stated that June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023, will be a preview webinar for the Summit.

#### **Action Items:**

- **Member, David Allgood made the motion to approve the December 2, 2022, Quarterly Meeting Minutes and a second was provided by member, Rebecca Wilson. A vote was taken, and all were in favor except member, Jessica Beaven and Member, Dina Klimkina could not be counted as they were unable to maintain video connection during the meeting. The motion passed.**
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**Public Comment:**

None

**Adjournment:**

Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. **Member, Jeff Edwards made the motion to adjourn. Member, Todd Coffey provided a second to the motion. A vote was taken and all were in favor except Member, Jessica Beaven and Member, Dina Klimkina could not be counted as they were unable to maintain video connection during the meeting. The motion passed and the meeting was adjourned.**

**Next Meeting Date:**

Friday, July 14<sup>th</sup>, 2022

1:00pm – 3:00pm

Hybrid Format

Location: TBD

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Toll Free: (800) 372 - 7172 • Direct: (502) 782-3421 • Email: [Nanci.Howard@ky.gov](mailto:Nanci.Howard@ky.gov)

# **1<sup>st</sup>** EMPLOYMENT **FIRST** *Kentucky*

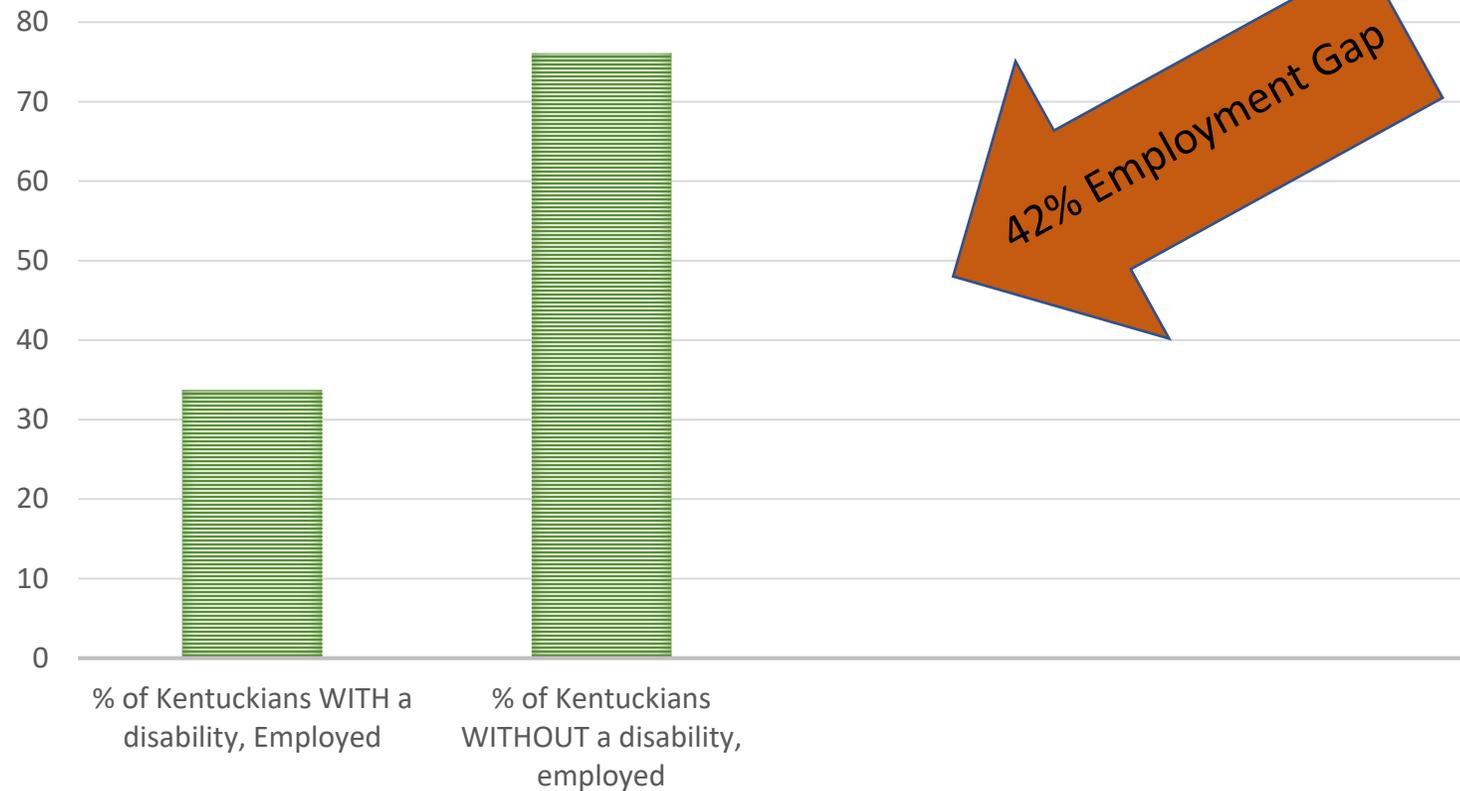
“The General Assembly finds and declares that it is the policy of the Commonwealth of Kentucky that competitive integrated employment shall be considered the first and primary option for persons with disabilities of working age who desire to become employed.”

# Our charge:

1. Identify state policies that create disincentives for the employment of people with disabilities and develop recommendations to address and eliminate those disincentives;
2. Develop training and resources for families, self-advocates, public and private providers, and employers on the benefits of competitive integrated employment of workers with a disability;
3. Recommend the development and implementation of policies and effective practices for providers of supported employment services that increase employment opportunities for workers with a disability;
4. Utilize appropriate metrics to assess progress of efforts to increase the competitive integrated employment of workers with a disability; and
5. Submit an annual report by December 1 to the Legislative Research Commission, the secretary of the Education and Workforce Development Cabinet, and the Governor summarizing its findings and recommendations.

# Disability Compendium 2023

## EMPLOYMENT RATE COMPARISON



**#48 (tied)**  
**In the Nation**

# Employment First Council Priorities: Follow Up

- Require cross agency collaboration, coordination, and information sharing among agencies providing publicly funded services to people with disabilities of working age.
- Require that employment first policy informs, without supplanting Federal or State law, the development and implementation of relevant agencies' individualized program/services plans.

# Employmentfirstky.org

## Employment First

[Home](#) > [Vocational Rehabilitation](#) > Employment First

### Definition of Employment First:

It is the policy of the Commonwealth of Kentucky that competitive integrated employment shall be considered the first and primary option for persons with disabilities of working age who desire to become employed, including those with the most significant disabilities. Simply put, it is the idea that everyone has the right to work!

[What is Employment First?](#)

### What is Competitive Integrated Employment?

Work that is performed on a full-time or part-time basis for which an individual is:

- Earning compensation at or above minimum wage and comparable to the customary rate paid by the employer to employees without disabilities performing similar duties and with similar training and experience;
- Receiving the same level of benefits provided to other employees without disabilities in similar positions;
- Working at a location where the employee interacts with other individuals without disabilities; and
- Receiving opportunities for advancement when appropriate similar to other employees without disabilities in similar positions.

### Employment First Timeline

Kentucky became an Employment First state on May 15th, 2018.

[Executive Order, June 29th, 2020](#)

[Senate Bill 104, signed March 24th, 2022.](#)

### [Meet the Council](#)

# Employment First in Kentucky

It is the policy of the Commonwealth of Kentucky that competitive integrated employment shall be considered the first and primary option for persons with disabilities of working age who desire to become employed.

Kentucky's Employment First Policy was signed into law on March 24, 2022.

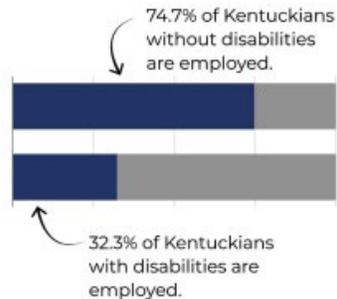
## What it Means

Employment in the general workforce should be the first and preferred option for individuals with disabilities receiving assistance from publicly-funded systems.

## Why it Matters

Kentucky has among the highest rate of people with disabilities in the nation and among the lowest rate of people with disabilities who are employed.\*

This 42.4% gap ranks Kentucky 45<sup>th</sup> in the nation.



## What it Will Do

Employment First will help to:

- Build an inclusive workforce
- Strengthen Kentucky's economy
- Improve the quality of life for citizens with disabilities across the Commonwealth

# Employment First in Kentucky

## Kentucky's Employment First Council

The Employment First Council advises the executive and legislative branches of government on increasing meaningful opportunities for competitive integrated employment for citizens with a disability seeking employment, regardless of their level of disability. The twenty-eight-member Council is appointed by the Governor.

For more information about Kentucky's Employment First Council, contact: [Nanci.Howard@ky.gov](mailto:Nanci.Howard@ky.gov).

## What You Can Do



**Employers** should consider how Employment First policy impacts employee recruitment, development, advancement, and retention.



**People with Disabilities** should consider how Employment First policy can help advance their employment goals and inform the services they need.



**State Policy Makers** should consider how implementation of Employment First informs and advances workforce development plans, policies, and other related efforts.



**Schools** should consider how Employment First policy impacts the development and implementation of Individual Education Program (IEP) postsecondary employment goals for students with disabilities.



**Disability Service Providers** should consider how Employment First policy impacts the provision of goal setting and service delivery.

## Resources

For more information on Employment First, visit [www.employmentfirstky.org](http://www.employmentfirstky.org)

[Click here](#) for more information on Competitive Integrated Employment.

Scan the QR code to the right to view a digital version of this document.



\*Source: 2021 Annual Disability Statistics Compendium

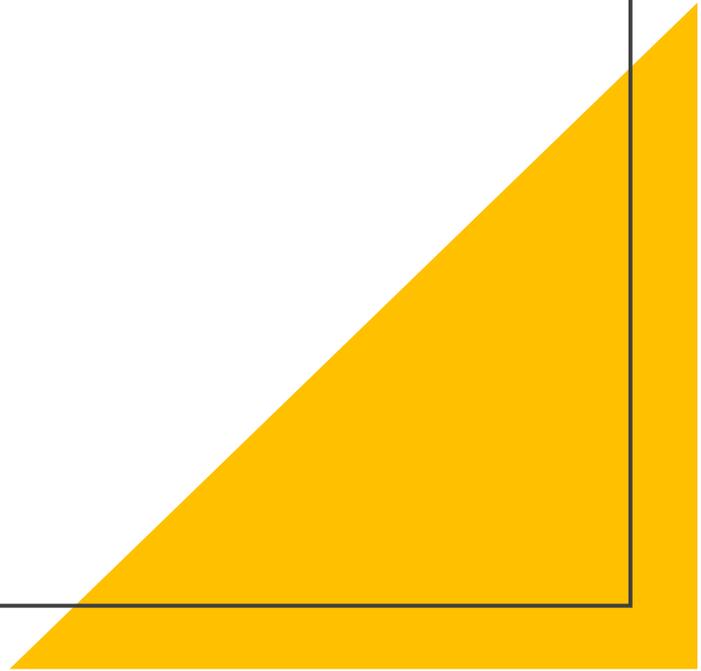


# NEON Support of Kentucky Employment First Council

Year One

# What Is NEON

- National Expansion of Employment Opportunities Network
  - US Department of Labor
    - Office of Disability Employment Policy
      - Econsys
        - Karen Lee, your Subject Matter Expert



# NEON Year One FY20

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5 National Provider Organizations- NPO's

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5 providers from each NPO

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Speak at all NPO conference

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Monthly Best Practice Webinars

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Outcomes

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Most technical assistance ended because of the pandemic, 10 providers overall finished the year

# Year 2

- Same 5 NPO's
- Increased Providers to 10
- Annual Conferences
- National practice documents
- Provider Transformation Assessment Tool
  
- Outcomes:
  - Providers rejoined if they were able, 15 finished the year
  - We closed 8 sheltered workshops and supported CIE

# Year 3

- Increase providers to 20 per NPO
- Most Conferences started up again
- Provider transformation or capacity building got some traction
- Outcome:
  - Focus on diversity and equity opportunities
  - Increase of CIE across 20 states

# Year 4 of NEON

- Same 5 providers- 10 LPO's
- Addition of State resources and Technical Assistance- 100 Hours per year
  - Kentucky
  - Hawaii
  - DC
  - Rhode Island
  - California
  - Colorado
  - Kansas
  - Missouri
  - Delaware
  - New York
  - Tennessee

Kentucky  
will use  
NEON to  
Support  
E1st  
Council

- Supporting the Council Leadership  
25% of the time
  - Chair: Katie Wolf-Whaley
  - Staff: Nanci Howard
- Council Support  
25% of the time
- Public Policy Committee  
50% of the time

# Council Leadership Outcomes:



**Review Infrastructure of the council and share best practices related to E1st Councils**



**Conduct an analysis of external and internal groups**



**Create a strategic path to meet the legislative requirements**

Committee Structures: Charters and planning

Meeting Structures

Annual Outcome Planning

Annual Goals

Strategic partners

# Council Support – Best Practice

Share best practices in the areas related to the work of the sub-committees

- Provider Capacity
- Public Policy
- Practices including
  - Transition
  - Supported Employment
- Stakeholders
  - Job Seekers
  - Employers
  - Families

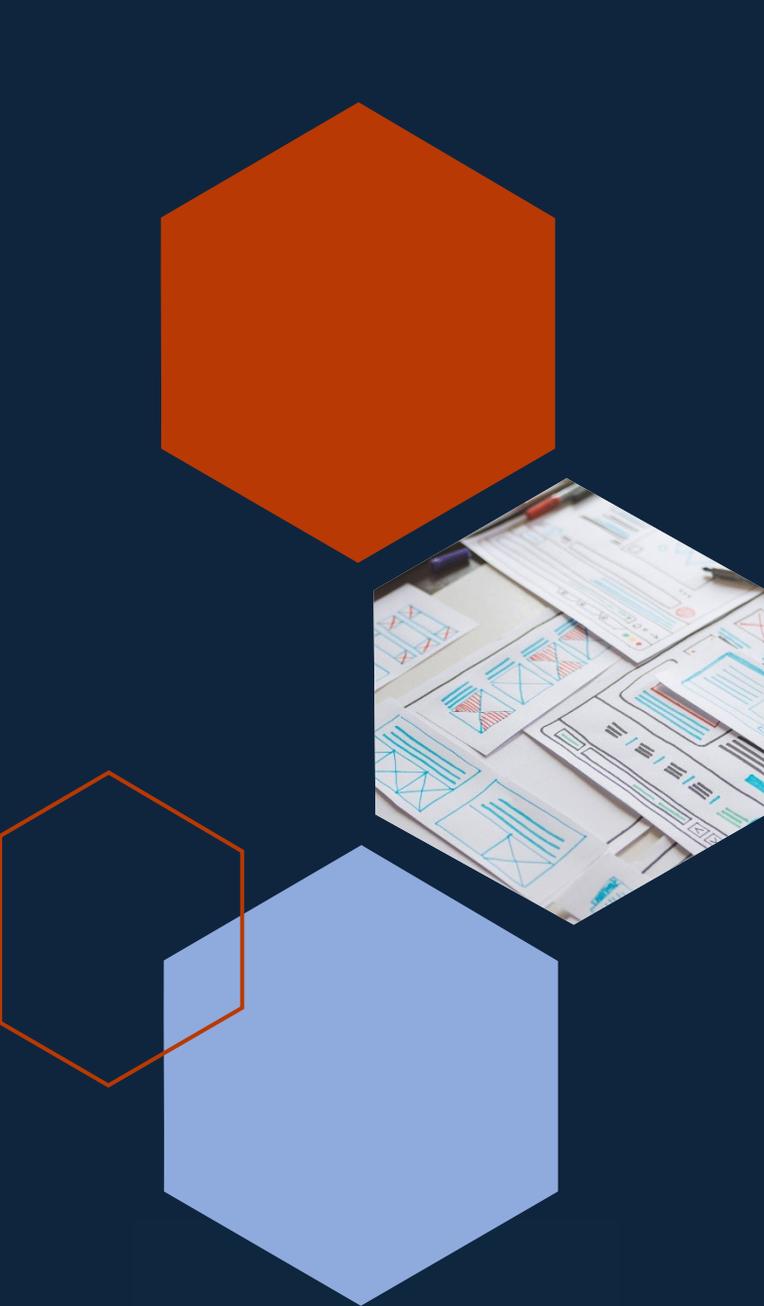
# Public Policy Committee

- Create an MOU regarding review of current legislation, internal processes and collaboration with other entities
- Review of Public Policy and share findings
  - OVR Policies
  - State Legislation
  - Department of Education school to work transition policies
- Negotiate and Remediate changes to be made in public policies

# Employer Education & Engagement Subcommittee

Action Items for 4/14/23 Council Meeting  
Merry Reid Sheffer





# Two main action items

## 1. Landing page for Employment 1st Materials (waiting to vote):

- Open to collaboration with other subcommittees/full council
- Ideas to consider: HDI's current E1st page on OVR website, application, or chamber collaboration

## 2. Employer Lunch & Learn Series (ready for vote)

- Virtual/statewide
- 6 proposed sessions
- Targeted EE&E members organizing sessions/speakers



## SERIES TOPICS:

- **WIPA for Employers** (Rebecca Wilson – Emily James)
- **Demystifying Regulatory Issues around Disability Hiring** (Zach Morgan – exploring potential resources/speakers)
- **Etiquette, Myths, and Range of Disability Experience** (Deana Wilson-Kimble – Cheryl Martinez)
- **Customized Employment for Industry Innovation** (Merry Reid Sheffer – Milton Tyree)
- **Coalition Creation and Replication** (Todd Coffee – Amanda Owen, Kitty Zachary)
- **Creating an Accommodations Process – Amazon Case Study** (Michael Rimer – Vanessa S)

# PROVIDER CAPACITY SUBCOMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

## Product Creation

Developed a one-page accessible document describing the employment process in Kentucky and the assistance persons can expect to receive from providers.



**If you are a person with a disability you can get help to earn money by finding a job...**

...at no additional cost to you or your future employer.

### Where should I start?

The Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) helps people with disabilities find and keep jobs. When you contact the OVR office that serves your area, you will talk to a person known as a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor. They will get to know you, see if you are eligible for services, and help you get the kind of help you need to succeed. They will make arrangements for a provider to work with you. And will stay in touch with you to make sure everything is going well. When the time is right, OVR and your provider will help you understand when it is time for you to work at your job while only getting help from your coworkers and your boss.



### What kind of help could I get?



You could get many different kinds of help. If you do not already know the kind of work you would like to do, you could get help to decide. Then you could get help to find a job where you get a chance to be successful. When you start your job, you can get help learning everything you need to know and do at work. Later on, if you decide you would like to try to get a promotion or do something different, you might even be able to get help with that. If you are not ready to get a job now, there could be services to help you get ready. There may even be help to get special training or equipment.

### Is there help available from others?

There could be. If you are a student attending high school, funding could be available through your school to help you get ready to find a job before OVR funding becomes available. If you receive Medicaid waiver services, you can get help over a long period of time. This support should begin after OVR services stop and can continue as long as you have your job. So, any time OVR funding is not available to help you figure out the kind of job you would like to have, help you find a job, or help with your job training, you can still get the help you need through the Medicaid waiver.



### Responses to Waiver Provider Question Regarding Why Participants Wishing to Work Do Not Receive Supported Employment Services

Lack of Available Supported Employment Services	32.65%
Time Required to Establish Services through OVR is Prohibitive	26.53%
Lack of Family/Guardian Support	24.49%
Lack of Commitment by the Participant	14.29%
Transportation	12.24%

### Waiver Provider Survey answers to the question, "What do you need to begin or resume providing Supported Employment services?"

Assistance to hire qualified staff	60.53%
Assist employers to increase job opportunities for participants	15.79%
Initiate changes to assist providers maintain sufficient caseloads to break even	15.79%
Provide additional training on all aspect of Supported Employment	15.79%

### Training Needs to Initiate Employment Services

How to become a supported employment provider	52.63%
Overview of the Supported Employment process	26.32%
Review of Supported Employment regulatory requirements	15.79%
How to find qualified staff	10.53%

## Analysis

Reviewed service delivery for persons with IDD, Behavioral Health, and Substance-Use involvement and began the analysis of potential barriers to Employment First at the micro level.



## Goals

Develop tools and training to help providers successfully implement Employment First, incorporating any system changes that might occur.

