



Employment First Kentucky Full Council Meeting

Date: July 10, 2026

Time: 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm EST

Location: Office of Vocational Rehabilitation

500 Mero Street, Frankfort, KY 40601 | Via Zoom

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.

[Kentucky's Employment First Policy](#) was signed into law on March 24, 2022.

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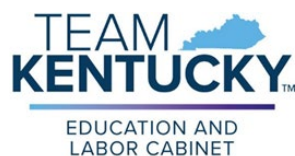


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Kentucky Employment First Council

Executive Committee

Date: June 18, 2026

Location: Virtual Meeting

Time: 3:00pm – 4:00pm (EST)

Virtual Option: [Zoom Access](#)

1. Welcome (3:00pm)

Presenter: Katie Wolf Whaley, Chair

2. Committee Reports (3:05pm)

Presenter: Committee Members

3. Annual Report - Upcoming Planning Meetings (3:25pm)

Presenter: Nanci Howard, Administrator

4. Finalize July 10, 2026 Quarterly Meeting Agenda (3:35pm)

Participants: Committee Members

5. Additional Discussion - July 10, 2026 Quarterly Meeting (3:40pm)

Participants: Committee Members

6. Public Comment (3:50pm)

Participants: Members of the public (up to 3 minutes per speaker)

7. Adjournment (4:00pm)



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Jamie Link
Secretary, Education and Labor Cabinet

Employment First Council Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

June 18, 2026

3:00pm – 4:00pm (EST)

Zoom

Meeting ID: 846 2844 7176

Members' Present

Council Chair Katie Wolf Whaley, Vice-Chair Jeff White, Legislative Liaison Andrew Johnson, Amanda Owen, Merry Reid Sheffer, and Shelly Durbin

Members' Absent

Tal Curry

Staff Present

Nanci Howard and Anu Kumari

Welcome

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

Committee Reports

Advocacy and Education Committee

Amanda Owen, Chair of the Advocacy and Education Committee, provided an update on Committee's work. The committee reported ongoing efforts to improve access to

Employment First resources and information. Updates included completion of the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) webpages with improved navigation and audience-specific sections, continued development of educator-focused newsletter content, and the collaboration with the Transition Committee on resource distribution and outreach.

Work is also underway to update the Employment First overview sheet with current information and a QR code linking to the FAQ webpages.

The committee additionally discussed the potential development of a video series highlighting employment success stories and Employment First resources.

Employer Education and Engagement Committee

Merry Reid Sheffer, Chair of the Employer Education and Engagement Committee, provided an update on the committee's work. The committee reported the release of the sixth [Autism-Informed Employer video](#) and announced the upcoming quarterly Autism-Informed Employer discussion session scheduled for June 25.

The discussion sessions provide an interactive opportunity for participants to review video content, ask questions, and engage in conversation. To encourage open dialogue and participation, the sessions are not recorded.

The committee continues to support employer education through the Autism-Informed Employer initiative and its partnership with the Training and Improvement Project (TIP), including presentations on Competitive Integrated Employment and Employment First principles.

Public Policy Committee

Andrew Johnson, Chair of the Public Policy Committee, provided an update on the committee's work. The committee reported that the previous meeting was canceled due to a lack of agenda items and the guest speaker's unavailability.

Discussion focused on OVR's Order of Selection, implementation of the new case management system, Project NEON activities, federal IEP guidance, Medicaid-related issues, and the July 1 transition to the OVR new case management system. The committee continues monitoring federal IEP guidance. Members were also informed that no volunteers responded to the request to participate in an IEP Workgroup and the initiative has been placed on hold.

Provider Capacity Committee

Shelly Durbin, Chair of the Provider Capacity Committee, provided an update on the committee's activities. The committee received updates regarding Project NEON.

The committee continues working toward finalizing the webinar for providers with a goal of finalizing the series October 2026.

Additional discussion focused on provider capacity and the potential impact of proposed Medicaid reimbursement rate reductions on providers and employment services. Members acknowledged the uncertainty surrounding these developments and agreed to continue monitoring the situation as additional information becomes available.

Transition Committee

On behalf of Tal Curry, Chair of the Transition Committee, Council Chair Katie Wolf Whaley provided an update on the committee's ongoing efforts. It was reported that the committee continues working on resource distribution plans and outreach efforts to increase awareness of Employment First resources among stakeholders. No additional updates were provided.

Annual Report - Upcoming Planning Meetings

KYOVR Administrator Nanci Howard presented an overview of the timeline for developing the 2026 Employment First Council Annual Report. Planning meetings will be held following the July council meeting and throughout late July, August, and September.

Committee Chairs will be asked to provide activities, accomplishments, and recommendations for inclusion in the report. The goal is to present a draft report to the Council in October for review, feedback, and potential approval prior to finalization and submission.

Nanci also discussed transitioning the annual report tracking spreadsheet to a shared document to allow committee members to directly contribute information throughout the report development process and noted that she will continue coordinating with committee leadership in the coming months.

Finalized Agenda for July 10, 2026, Quarterly Meeting

Discussion was held regarding the finalization of the agenda for the July 10, 2026, Employment First Council Quarterly Meeting. The committee reviewed the draft agenda and

discussed the inclusion of the Rooted and Rising presentation by Elizabeth Kries, a Medicaid waiver rates update, and an Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) update regarding the Order of Selection and Case Management System implementation.

Discussion also included potential presenters for agenda items. Jeff White will follow up with Kathy Larza regarding the Medicaid Waiver Rates update, and the Administrator of the council will consult with OVR Executive Director, Cora McNabb, to provide the OVR Order of Selection update.

Following discussion, the proposed agenda was accepted by all.

Additional Discussion

- Committee discussed proposed Medicaid reimbursement rate reductions and their potential impact on providers, employment services, and long-term supports.
- An update was discussed regarding a recent House Bill 144 Commission meeting, during which recommendations related to Employment First were discussed.
- Members discussed Project NEON activities and the implementation of OVR's new case management system, including the upcoming transition period associated with the new system rollout.
- Members emphasized the importance of continuing to monitor policy and funding developments that may affect Employment First initiatives.
- The committee was reminded that the Employment First Council Quarterly Meeting is scheduled for July 10, 2026, from 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM ET at the Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, Room 136 CE, 1st Floor, 500 Mero Street, Frankfort, KY 40601.

Public Comment

None.

Adjournment

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

Next Meeting Date

Thursday, September 17, 2026

3:00 PM – 4:00 PM (EST)



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Kentucky Employment First Council

Advocacy and Education Committee

Date: May 1, 2026

Location: Virtual Meeting

Time: 9:00am – 10:00am (EST)

Virtual Option: [Zoom Access](#)

1. **Welcome** (9:00am)

Presenter: Katie Wolf Whaley, Employment First Council Chair

2. **FAQ Document Update** (9:05am)

Presenter: Katie Wolf Whaley, Employment First Council Chair

3. **Newsletter Content Discussion** (9:15am)

Presenter: Katie Wolf Whaley, Employment First Council Chair

4. **Additional Projects for 2026 Discussion** (9:30am)

Participants: Committee Members

5. 2026 Activities and Recommendations for the Annual Report (9:40am)

Participants: Committee Members

6. Public Comment (9:50am)

Participants: Members of the public (up to 3 minutes per speaker)

7. Adjournment (10:00am)



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Employment First Council

Advocacy and Education Committee

Minutes

May 1, 2026

9:00 am – 10:00 am (EST)

Zoom

Meeting ID: 843 2807 2518

Members' Present

Council Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley, Thomas Thompson, Tracy Belfield, Melanie Lybarger, Megan Kuhlwein, and Carrie Wedding

Members' Absent

Amanda Owen, Susan Brown, and Jeff Edwards

Staff Present

Nanci Howard, Michelle Cobb, and Anu Kumari

Welcome

On behalf of the Committee Chair, Employment First Council Chair Katie Wolf Whaley welcomed attendees. The agenda was reviewed and acknowledged by all participants.

Newsletter Content Discussion

The committee reviewed a proposed draft newsletter insert and discussed revisions.

Insert 1: “Start with the Expectation”

The committee recommended refining the opening message to ensure it is clear, concise, and impactful.

The following draft language was discussed for inclusion/exclusion:

The line “*it’s not only for some students,*” was removed to avoid duplication. It was suggested to add language to explain why employment matters.

Insert 2: “What This Means for Schools”

The committee discussed including information about the Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (KYOVR).

During the committee meeting, the following draft language was proposed by OVR staff support and included in the chat box. Additionally, the following language was initially approved by Cabinet Communications:

Have you heard about the Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR)? Think OVR when you are thinking about the transition needs of your students. OVR assists students in moving from school to employment or further education that leads to employment, aligning with the mission to help individuals with disabilities gain independence and economic security through work.

OVR is currently in Order of Selection (OOS) due to the inability to serve all eligible individuals. However, students should still apply to secure their place in line for when the agency begins to serve those individuals on the waiting list. More information can be found at [Order of Selection - Kentucky Career Center](#).

Once OVR begins serving individuals from the wait list, students will be served based on the date they applied for services, so early application is important.

You can find your local OVR office using the Kentucky Career Center website to search based on the student’s home location.

While on the waiting list, students may receive Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) if they received Pre-ETS before being assigned to the wait list. Pre-ETS can help students gain exposure and experiences in careers and employment.

It was suggested that guidance on how to apply for Pre-ETS should be clearly defined to ensure educators understand how to connect students to these services.

Insert 3: “Families Need You to Lead the Conversation”

The committee discussed including targeted resource links to support families and educators without making the insert too long.

Suggested resources include:

- [University of Kentucky resources for job seekers, families, and supporters](#)
- Transition 360 for Families
- Kentucky SPIN (Special Parent Involvement Network)

The committee emphasized keeping this insert brief and limiting the number of links so the message remains clear and easy to use.

Key Considerations

Keep content clear and concise:

Use short, easy-to-read language so educators can quickly understand the message.

Include clear action steps:

Clearly state what educators should do, such as connecting students to services or starting transition conversations.

Use existing communication channels:

Share inserts through established newsletters, including Special Education, Career and Technical Education networks, and regional cooperatives, rather than creating new distribution methods.

Be strategic with timing:

Share information at key points in the school year, such as early in the year for awareness and during spring (April–May) when transition and placement activities are occurring.

Plan ongoing communication:

Consider sharing inserts quarterly to build awareness and reinforce key messages over time.

Tailor messaging to the audience:

Adjust content as needed for educators, families, and workforce partners to ensure relevance and effectiveness.

Allow flexibility:

Access to services such as Pre-ETS may vary by location, so guidance should remain adaptable.

FAQ Document Update

The committee received an update regarding enhancements to the Employment First Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) resource. The current FAQ, previously available as a PDF on the website, will be transitioned into a web-based format to improve accessibility and usability.

The updated FAQ will be hosted on a dedicated webpage with organized sections and expandable topics tailored to specific audiences, including job seekers, families, educators, service providers, and employers. This structure will improve navigation and make it easier for users to locate relevant information. It was noted that OVR staff are working to update and develop the new FAQ webpage.

Updates to the Employment First one-pager were also discussed, including adding a QR code and link to the FAQ. The committee also discussed improving visibility and usability by carefully placing QR codes and links to ensure clarity and accessibility across both digital and print formats.

Public Comments

None.

Adjournment

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

Next Meeting Date

June 12, 2026
9:00am – 10:00am – Friday (EST)



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Kentucky Employment First Council

Advocacy and Education Committee

Date: June 12, 2026

Location: Virtual Meeting

Time: 9:00am – 10:00am (EST)

Virtual Option: [Zoom Access](#)

1. **Welcome (9:00am)**

Presenter: Amanda Owen, Committee Chair

2. **Newsletter Updates/Content Discussion (9:05am)**

Presenter: Amanda Owen, Committee Chair

3. **Plan for Submission of Newsletter Content (9:20am)**

Presenter: Amanda Owen, Committee Chair

4. **Additional Projects for 2026 Discussion (9:35am)**

Participants: Committee Members

5. 2026 Activities and Recommendations for the Annual Report (9:45am)

Participants: Committee Members

6. Public Comment (9:55am)

Participants: Members of the public (up to 3 minutes per speaker)

7. Adjournment (10:00am)

Employment First Council

Advocacy and Education Committee

Minutes

June 12, 2026

9:00 am – 10:00 am (EST)

Zoom

Meeting ID: 843 2807 2518

Members' Present

Committee Chair, Amanda Owen, Council Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley, Thomas Thompson, Melanie Lybarger

Members' Absent

Susan Brown, and Jeff Edwards

Staff Present

Nanci Howard, Michelle Cobb, and Anu Kumari

Welcome

Employment First Committee Chair Amanda Owen welcomed attendees. The agenda was reviewed and acknowledged by all participants.

Newsletter Updates | Content Discussion

The committee continued reviewing the draft newsletter inserts and discussed content, sequencing, and potential calls to action.

Discussion focused on directing educators to practical resources that support transition planning, employment-focused discussions, and implementation of Employment First principles within school settings.

Resources discussed for inclusion in the newsletter series included:

- [Employment First Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\) webpage and Education Professional resources](#)
- [Pre-Employment Transition Services \(Pre-ETS\) information](#)
- Employment First informational materials and flyers

Members also discussed feedback from education stakeholders regarding the importance of providing specific actions and targeted resource links that educators can easily access and utilize.

Employment First Website Updates:

The committee received an update regarding ongoing revisions to the Employment First Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) webpages. It was reported that OVR staff are currently working on updates to the HTML webpages.

Discussion included website navigation and accessibility. The committee noted that the FAQ webpages are expected to serve as primary destinations for future newsletter links once updates are completed. Existing Employment First resources, including informational flyers and FAQ materials, were also discussed as tools to support future outreach efforts.

Plan for Submission of Newsletter Content

The committee discussed plans for distributing newsletter content through existing education-focused communication channels and emphasized utilizing established networks rather than creating new distribution methods.

Potential distribution opportunities discussed included:

- Education-focused newsletters
- Existing stakeholder communication networks
- Contacts and distribution lists identified through the Transition Committee

The committee discussed continuing to refine newsletter content throughout the summer and preparing materials for distribution prior to the beginning of the school year.

Additional Projects for 2026 Discussion

The committee discussed the possibility of developing short educational videos as a future outreach initiative.

Discussion included highlighting Employment First principles, Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS), work-based learning experiences, transition services, and successful employment outcomes. Examples of existing video resources were discussed, along with the potential value of showcasing real-world transition and employment experiences.

Action Items

The committee identified the following action items:

- Continue refining newsletter inserts and related resource links.
- Gather feedback from educators and transition professionals regarding newsletter content and resource needs.
- Follow up on updates to the Employment First FAQ webpage and Education Professional resources.
- Coordinate with the Transition Committee regarding distribution opportunities and stakeholder contacts.
- Continue planning for newsletter distribution prior to the start of the school year.
- Explore future outreach opportunities, including educational video resources.

Additional Announcement:

The committee was informed that the Employment First Council Quarterly Meeting is scheduled for July 10, 2026, from 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM ET at the Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, Room 136 CE, 1st Floor, 500 Mero Street, Frankfort, KY 40601.

Public Comments

None.

Adjournment

Employment First Committee Chair Amanda Owen thanked everyone for their contribution and adjourned the meeting.

Next Meeting Date

July 24, 2026

9:00am – 10:00am – Friday (EST)



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Kentucky Employment First Council

Employer Education and Engagement Committee

Date: April 1, 2026

Location: Virtual Meeting

Time: 1:00pm – 2:00pm (EST)

Virtual Option: [Zoom Access](#)

1. **Welcome and Introductions** (1:00pm)

Presenter: Merry Reid Sheffer, Committee Chair

2. **Autism Informed Employer Series Progress Update** (1:05pm)

Presenter: Bev Harp, UKHDI, ISAW

3. **Update on Partnering with the Training Innovation Project (TIP)** (1:35pm)

Presenter: Merry Reid Sheffer, Committee Chair

4. **Public Comment** (1:55pm)

Participants: Members of the public (up to 3 minutes per speaker)

5. **Adjournment** (2:00pm)

Employment First Council

Employer Education and Engagement Committee

Meeting Minutes

April 1, 2026

1:00 pm – 2:00 pm (EST)

Zoom

Meeting ID: 865 1127 0774

Members' Present

Committee Chair Merry Reid Sheffer, Council Chair Katie Wolf Whaley, Laurie Mays, Rebecca Wilson, Down Rollins, Deana Wilson-Kimble, Zachery Sappenfield, Amanda Hutchison, Dorian Moe, Deborah Minton and Bev Harp, and Terry Madden.

Members Absent

Susan Brown

Staff Present

Nanci Howard, Anu Kumari, Kristen Beach, and Ryan Henson

Welcome | Agenda Review

Employment First Committee Chair Merry Reid Sheffer welcomed attendees. Introductions were made. The agenda was reviewed and acknowledged.

Autism Informed Employer Series Progress Update

Bev Harp provided an update on the progress of the Autism-Informed Employer (AIE) video series and related activities. It was reported that the series continues to move forward as planned and remains on schedule.

Key Highlights:

- Three videos have been released
- A fourth video is expected in the coming week

The current series focuses on hiring practices, including:

- Episode One – “Why Hire Autistic Workers?”
- Episode Two – “What to expect in the interview.”
- Additional content focused on general hiring and interview guidance for employers

It was also reported on the first quarterly virtual discussion session held on March 26, 2026. Nearly, 60 participants attended, and the session was well received. The format, which included video highlights, informational slides, and open discussion, supported engagement and meaningful conversation.

Additional updates included:

- Increased outreach and visibility of the series, including social media sharing and positive feedback from external partners.
- A small increase in newly identified autism-informed employers following the discussion session.
- Planned upcoming video topics, including sensory support needs, movement needs, and social needs of autistic workers, followed by communication-focused topics.
- The next quarterly discussion session was identified for June 25, 2026

Suggested topics for future development included:

- Universal design in the workplace
- Natural supports for employees
- Self-advocacy strategies
- Disclosure and non-disclosure considerations
- Employer approaches to accommodations

An update was also provided on evaluation efforts, with approximately 15 evaluations completed and additional responses expected. Results will be shared once finalized to inform future planning and improvements.

Update on Partnering with the Training Innovation Project (TIP)

Deborah Minton provided an update on the Training Innovation Project (TIP), noting that feedback and ideas from previous discussions had been compiled and shared with project partners. TIP staff were actively reaching out to individuals and organizations to coordinate and schedule upcoming activities and presentations.

The committee was informed of an upcoming “Lunch and Learn” session scheduled for April 21, 2026, at 12:00 PM (EST), featuring a presentation by Matthew Shaughnessy on “*Enabling Employment Opportunities with Immersive Technology.*”

Additional discussion included potential topics and presenters for the TIP series, including:

- Project SEARCH (*with a recommendation to involve KYOVR Staff Betty Whitaker*)
- Healthcare as a rehabilitation partner and major employer (*Deborah Minton*)
- Empowering employees with disabilities (*Zachery Sappenfield*)
- The business case for hiring and retaining qualified people with disabilities (*Laurie Mays & employer partner- KY Chamber*)
- Services available from state VR to support businesses and employees and their employees (*Ryan Henson*)
- Competitive integrated employment: A Primary from business (*Merry Reid Sheffer*)
- Occupational Therapy, driver training, and autism+ Interactions with law enforcement (*Becky Wilson’s Daughter*)
- DMV accommodation (e.g., written test options, reader support, extended time)

The committee emphasized the importance of continued collaboration and leveraging shared expertise to support employment outcomes.

Additional Discussion

Upcoming Meeting Announcement:

The following upcoming meetings and engagement opportunities are available. Members and stakeholders are encouraged to participate and share these opportunities within their networks.

- Employment First Council Quarterly Meeting: Friday, April 10, 2026 | 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM (EST) Hybrid format (in-person at the Mayo-Underwood Building, Frankfort, Kentucky.
- Autism-Informed Employer (AIE) Quarterly Discussion: The next quarterly discussion session is scheduled for June 25, 2026.
- Training Innovation Project, “Lunch and Learn” Session: Tuesday, April 21, 2026 | 12:00 PM (EST).

Public Comments

None.

Adjournment

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

Next Meeting Date

- Wednesday, May 06, 2026
- 1:00 pm- 2:00 pm (EST)



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Kentucky Employment First Council

Employer Education and Engagement Committee

Date: May 6, 2026

Location: Virtual Meeting

Time: 1:00pm – 2:00pm (EST)

Virtual Option: [Zoom Access](#)

1. **Welcome and Introductions** (1:00pm)

Presenter: Merry Reid Sheffer, Committee Chair

2. **Autism Informed Employer Series Progress Update** (1:05pm)

Presenter: Bev Harp, UKHDI, ISAW

3. **Partnering with the Training Innovation Project (TIP) Update** (1:35pm)

Presenter: Merry Reid Sheffer, Committee Chair

4. **Public Comment** (1:55pm)

Participants: Members of the public (up to 3 minutes per speaker)

5. **Adjournment** (2:00pm)

Employment First Council

Employer Education and Engagement Committee

Meeting Minutes

May 06, 2026

1:00 pm – 2:00 pm (EST)

Zoom

Meeting ID: 865 1127 0774

Members' Present

Employment First Council Chair Katie Wolf Whaley, Rebecca Wilson, Zachery Sappenfield, Amanda Hutchison, Christina Forster, Dorian Moe, and Deborah Minton

Members Absent

Merry Reid Sheffer, Susan Brown, Laurie Mays, and Deana Wilson-Kimble

Staff Present

Nanci Howard, Anu Kumari, Kristen Beach, and Ryan Henson

Welcome | Introduction | Agenda Review

On behalf of the Committee Chair, Employment First Council Chair Katie Wolf Whaley welcomed attendees. Introductions were made. The agenda was reviewed and acknowledged.

Autism-Informed Employer Series Progress Update

An update was provided on the progress of the Autism-Informed Employer (AIE) video series and related activities.

Key Highlights:

- Four videos have been released.
- A fifth video was expected to be released in mid-May.

The current series focuses on hiring practices, including:

- Episode One – “Why Hire Autistic Workers?”
- Episode Two – “What to Expect in the Interview.”
- Episode Three- “Interview Tips.”
- Episode Four- “Sensory Needs of the Autistic Worker.”
- Episode Five- “Focused on the social needs of autistic workers and inclusive workplace practices.”

A production delay related to changes in recording support was discussed; however, work on the May and June videos continued. Amanda Hutchison volunteered to assist with voice narration for upcoming videos. Scripts for future recordings had already been prepared to maintain the planned release schedule. The committee also encouraged continued sharing of the videos through newsletters, social media, and other communication channels. Members were encouraged to reach out regarding the status of upcoming video releases for future communications or newsletter distributions.

The committee received an update regarding the first quarterly virtual discussion session held on March 26, 2026. Members reported strong participation with nearly 100 registrations and nearly 60 attendees representing employers, workforce professionals, service providers, and community partners. The session was well received, and the format, which included video highlights, informational slides, and open discussion, supported engagement and meaningful conversation.

The committee also shared that the next quarterly discussion session was scheduled for June 25, 2026, from 12:00pm - 1:00pm (EST). [Registration](#) and outreach efforts for the upcoming session were discussed.

Update on Partnering with the Training Innovation Project (TIP)

Christina Forster from the HDI evaluation team provided an update regarding ongoing collaboration with the [Training Innovation Project \(TIP\)](#) and upcoming training opportunities.

It was reported that the next TIP “Learn at Lunch” entitled “ [Why Competitive Integrated Employment Matters to Business: The Bottom Line: Learn at Lunch](#) session was

scheduled for May 19, 12:00pm – 1:00pm (EST), presented by Employment First Council member, Merry-Reid Sheffer. Currently, it was reported there were nearly 32 registrants. Additional outreach has recently been distributed through HDI and the TIP listserv to encourage continued participation.

The committee also discussed the first TIP Community of Practice session held in April 2026, which nearly 18 participants attended. The next TIP Community of Practice session, [Communities of Practice: Training Innovation Project](#), was scheduled for June 23, 12:00 pm – 12:30 pm (EST).

An upcoming presentation entitled, [Setting the Record Straight About Hiring and Retaining Disabled Workers: Debunking Myths A TIP Master Class](#) will be held on June 24, 2026 from 2:00pm – 3:00pm (EST) presented by, Dr Phillip Rumrill, PhD, CRC

An announced upcoming Learn at Lunch session focused on disability and unemployment topics on June 16, 2026. More information will be provided as available.

Plans for a business needs survey were also discussed and is intended to gather feedback from employers and businesses regarding workforce and disability employment needs. It was reported that the survey was expected to be distributed the following week and encouraged committee members, other committees, and partner organizations to share the survey through their professional and provider networks to support participation and outreach efforts. The committee also discussed continued collaboration and support for identifying future presenters and training topics.

Public Comments

None.

Adjournment

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

Next Meeting Date

June 3, 2026

1:00 pm- 2:00pm (EST)



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Kentucky Employment First Council

Provider Capacity Committee

Date: May 5, 2026

Location: Virtual Meeting

Time: 2:00pm – 3:00pm (EST)

Virtual Option: [Zoom Access](#)

1. **Welcome** (2:00pm)

Presenter: Shelly Durbin, Provider Capacity Committee Chair

2. **Update on Project NEON** (2:05pm)

Presenter: Jeff White, Employment First Council Vice-Chair

3. **Indications from Waiver Provider Survey** (2:10pm)

Presenter: Jeff White

4. **Order of Selection Update** (2:20pm)

Presenter: Ron O’Hair, KYOVR CRP/SE Branch Manager

5. Provider Webinar Status (2:25pm)

Presenter: Shelly Durbin

6. Topics needed by Providers (2:30pm)

Presenter: Shelly Durbin

7. Resources available for Providers (2:40pm)

Presenter: Shelly Durbin

8. Public Comment (2:50pm)

Participants: Members of the public (up to 3 minutes per speaker)

9. Adjournment (3:00pm)



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Employment First Council

Provider Capacity Committee

Minutes
May 5, 2026
2:00pm – 3:00pm (EST)
Zoom
Meeting ID: 849 2541 6136

Members' Present

Employment First Committee Chair Shelly Durbin, Council Chair Katie Wolf Whaley, Council Vice Chair Jeff White, Susan Brown, Joann Wells, proxy for Leslie Hoffmann, Carmen Hancock, Alisha Clark, Stephanie Miller, Cathy Anderson, Zac Sappenfield, Lisa Carrico, and Amanda Hutchinson

Members' Absent

Cora McNabb, Leslie Hoffmann, and Lori Norton

Staff Present

Ron O’Hair, Eric Barth, Nanci Howard, and Anu Kumari

Welcome | Agenda Review

Employment First Committee Chair, Shelly Durbin, welcomed attendees. The agenda was reviewed and acknowledged by all participants.

Update on Project NEON

Committee Member and Council Vice Chair, Jeff White, provided an update on Project NEON. Kentucky currently has 13 primary collaborators participating in the project and has

been awarded 550 hours of technical assistance support, including dedicated hours focused on data analysis and evaluation.

Key priority areas:

Addressing the Impact of Wages on Benefits

Efforts focused on examining the impact of wages on benefits and increasing understanding of state-specific benefit programs, including SNAP and KTAP, to support comprehensive benefits planning and training opportunities. The work group is led by Donna Osburn, with subject matter expert Michael Dalto.

Established Data Collection and Analysis Practices to Inform Future Decisions

Project NEON resources would be utilized to assess statewide data needs, evaluate current and previous initiatives, and identify opportunities to improve employment outcomes and service delivery across systems. The work group is led by Jeff White, with subject matter expert Jessie Oettinger.

Successful Implementation of Kentucky's I-RISE Initiative and its Integration

The I-Rise initiative continued to expand, with participants beginning to access services. Additional technical assistance opportunities related to housing supports were also identified to further strengthen the initiative. The work group is led by Lori Norton, with subject matter expert Karen Lee.

Ensuring the delivery of High-Quality Employment Services

Updates were provided regarding customized employment training and provider capacity efforts focused on expanding access to high-quality employment services and improving training accessibility statewide. The first pilot cohort was underway and scheduled to conclude at the end of June, with plans to evaluate and refine future implementation efforts. The workgroup is led by Katie Wolf Whaley, with subject Matter expert Trica Parkin Jones.

Increase the knowledge base of Case Manager and Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor

The workgroup continued developing training opportunities for case managers and counselors by using strategies to improve communication, increase system understanding, and strengthen coordination of services for individuals utilizing employment and long-term support programs. The workgroup is led by Carolyn Wheeler.

Indications from Waiver Provider Survey

The committee presented an overview of the waiver provider employment survey and noted that the data was compiled using information submitted by case managers and that the findings should be viewed as indicative trends due to some inconsistencies and incomplete data.

Key survey findings included:

471 waiver participants were working in workshop settings utilizing 14(c) subminimum wage certificates, with average weekly hours ranging from 12 to 13 hours. Under Non-Competitive Integrated Employment.

636 individuals were engaged in workshop and enclave employment settings, including approximately 211 individuals earning subminimum wages. Under Non-Competitive Integrated Employment.

822 individuals were participating in competitive integrated employment, including 478 individuals receiving supported employment services and 344 individuals working without formal supported employment supports.

The survey also identified 173 individuals actively working toward employment through supported employment services. It was noted that the survey reflected higher levels of competitive integrated employment participation than previously identified through traditional reporting methods.

The committee discussed the importance of improving statewide employment data collection and utilizing survey data to identify geographic areas with high demand for employment services and provider capacity needs across Kentucky.

Order of Selection Update

Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (KYOVR) staff provided clarification and responses regarding waitlist.

Question: *When will they begin removing people from the waitlist?*

Answer: Eighty-four individuals were removed from the waitlist and placed into accepted status on May 1. The agency would continue monitoring spending on a weekly basis, and additional individuals would be removed from the waitlist as funding becomes available to serve them.

Question: *How will the order of people be determined?*

Answer: Individuals would be removed from the waitlist beginning with Priority Category 1. Within Priority Category 1, individuals would be served in chronological order based on the date of application.

New applicants determined eligible, including those in Priority Category 1, would continue to be placed on the waitlist, as OVR is not fully opening Priority Category 1 at this time but instead serving individuals who have been waiting the longest.

Question: *How will consumers be contacted and how long will they wait before moving to someone else?*

Answer: Individuals would be contacted by their counselors using their preferred method of communication and would be asked to contact their counselor to begin development of their Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). Individuals would have 90 days to develop the IPE unless an extension was agreed upon.

Counselors do not have the authority to move on to another individual, and the agency would continue monitoring spending and notifying counselors when individuals are approved to move from the waitlist into accepted status. Individuals who do not respond would receive written notice and appeal rights prior to case closure after 90 days.

Question: *How will regional counselor workloads and service coordination be managed as individuals begin moving from the waitlist into active services?*

Answer: Staffing, management, and service capacity considerations would continue to be monitored closely, and adjustments may be necessary to ensure individuals receive appropriate services and support.

The committee recommended members to continually encourage individuals and families to monitor all communication methods from KYOVR for updates related to waitlist.

Provider Webinar Status

The committee provided an update on the Provider-Focused Webinar initiative. Content and information were received for all identified webinar topic areas. The presentation development is currently underway. Several presenters were finalizing slides and materials for inclusion in the webinar package prior to the approval process and release.

Topics needed by Providers

The committee invited and encouraged providers to share feedback, identify training needs, and suggest topics for future discussion. Members also encouraged continued provider participation and collaboration to support employment services across Kentucky.

Resources available for Providers

The committee shared several training and resource opportunities available to providers.

Information included:

[The SETP Professional Learning Community](#) (PLC) is currently accepting applications for the 2026–2027 year and will hold one cohort for Employment Specialists and one cohort for Managers. Applications will remain open through June 8.

[Visible Voice: Mental Wellness Strategies for Residential and Community Providers Working with Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing Individuals](#). May 19, 1:00 E. Hosted by Merge. CEUs for Deaf, Blind trainings are available

The Autism-Informed Employer (AIE) short video series was developed through the Employment First Council Employer Education and Engagement Committee, which provides brief informational resources that can be shared with employers to support autism-informed employment practices.

Transition, pre-ETS, and parent education resources are available to support providers, students, and families in employment planning and career development activities. A resource titled “As a Person with a Disability, [You Can Get Help Finding a Job](#)” was highlighted as a useful tool for middle school, high school, and Pre-ETS transition activities.

The committee emphasized the importance of ongoing provider training and encouraged providers to participate in available statewide professional development opportunities.

Public Comments

None

Adjournment

Employment First Committee Chair Shelly Durbin thanked everyone for their contribution and adjourned the meeting.

Next meeting

June 16, 2026
9:00am – 10:00am (EST)



Andy Beshear, Governor
Jamie Link, Education & Labor Cabinet Secretary
Employment First Council
500 Mero St., 1st Floor NE
Frankfort, KY 40601
Nanci.Howard@ky.gov

Kentucky Employment First Council

Provider Capacity Committee

Date: June 16, 2026

Location: Virtual Meeting

Time: 2:00pm – 3:00pm (EST)

Virtual Option: [Zoom Access](#)

1. **Welcome** (2:00pm)

Presenter: Shelly Durbin, Provider Capacity Committee Chair

2. **Update on Project NEON** (2:05pm)

Presenter: Jeff White, Employment First Council Vice-Chair

3. **Coordination of Funding Process** (2:10pm)

Presenter: Jeff White, Employment First Council Vice-Chair

4. **Update on OVR Waitlist** (2:20pm)

Presenter: Ron O’Hair, KYOVR CRP/SE Branch Manager

5. The Training Innovation Project (TIP) Learn at Lunch Series Opportunities *(2:25pm)*

Presenter: Shelly Durbin, Provider Capacity Committee Chair

6. Provider Webinar Update *(2:30pm)*

Presenter: Jeff White, Employment First Council Vice-Chair

7. 2026 Employment First Council Annual Report Activities/Recommendations *(2:40pm)*

Presenter: Employment First Council Members

8. Public Comment *(2:50pm)*

Participants: Members of the public (up to 3 minutes per speaker)

9. Adjournment *(3:00pm)*



Kentucky Employment First Council

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Andy Beshear

Governor

Jamie Link

Secretary, Education and Labor Cabinet

Employment First Council

Provider Capacity Committee

Minutes
June 16, 2026
2:00pm – 3:00pm (EST)
Zoom
Meeting ID: 849 2541 6136

Members' Present

Employment First Committee Chair Shelly Durbin, Council Chair Katie Wolf Whaley, Susan Brown, Alisha Clark, Stephanie Miller, Zac Sappenfield, Lisa Carrico, and Amanda Hutchinson

Members' Absent

Cora McNabb, Leslie Hoffmann, Joann Wells, Jeff White and Lori Norton

Staff Present

Ron O’Hair, Eric Barth, Nanci Howard, and Anu Kumari

Welcome | Agenda Review

Employment First Committee Chair, Shelly Durbin, welcomed attendees. The agenda was reviewed and acknowledged by all participants.

Update on Project NEON

In the absence of Employment First Council Vice Chair Jeff White, an update was provided regarding Project NEON. Committee were informed that discussions are underway to

address challenges states are experiencing with entering required information into the NEON data portal. Additional updates will be provided at a future committee meeting.

Coordination of Funding Process

An update was provided regarding the Coordination of Funding process. Members were informed that a small number of individuals have begun rising to the top of the OVR waiting list and that efforts are underway to establish a process for transitioning funding responsibility from waiver services to OVR services.

Committee members were reminded that OVR should be notified when Person-Centered Teams are contacted regarding funding transitions to help ensure a seamless transition of services. Members also discussed the continued use of waiver funding for expedited initial employment services while individuals remain on the OVR waiting list.

A committee member asked whether individuals had begun transitioning from waiver-funded services to OVR-funded services. In response, members were informed that several individuals have risen to the top of the OVR waiting list and that OVR is working to establish a process for transitioning funding responsibility as services become available.

Committee members reported positive experiences with the new Coordination of Funding form. Members noted that the revised process appears more streamlined and easier for providers to complete and shared that several individuals have successfully progressed through the process and are doing well in employment services.

Order of Selection Waitlist Update

Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (KYOVR) staff provided an update on the Order of Selection waitlist. Members were informed that there have been no significant changes since the previous meeting and that OVR continues to serve individuals from the waitlist in the order applications are received. Staff noted that individuals continue to be selected from the waitlist and transitioned into services.

Staff also reported that OVR's new case management system is scheduled to go live in July. Although staff have completed training, a temporary adjustment period is expected as the system is implemented. As a result, delays in service authorizations, case processing, and other administrative activities may occur during the transition.

Committee members acknowledged the anticipated implementation challenges and expressed appreciation for the continued progress being made in moving individuals from the waitlist into services.

Training Innovation Project (TIP) Learn at Lunch Series Opportunities:

The committee discussed ongoing training opportunities available through the [Training Innovation Project \(TIP\)](#) series. Members highlighted recent and upcoming webinars.

Members were informed that the next TIP Master Class [Setting the Record Straight About Hiring and Retaining Disabled Workers: Debunking Myths A TIP Master Class](#) is scheduled for June 24 and will be presented by Dr. Phillip Rumrill.

Additionally, members were informed that a TIP Community of Practice is expected to launch in August. Community of Practice will provide opportunities for participants to engage in discussions, share experiences, and collaborate on strategies related to employment services and provider practices.

Committee members were encouraged to explore upcoming TIP events and participate in future training opportunities.

Provider Webinar Update

The committee provided an update on the provider webinar. It was reported that the webinar presentation is in the final stages of preparation, with only a small amount of content still pending. Once all presentation materials are finalized, the PowerPoint slides will be submitted through the OVR Outreach mailbox for review by Communications. The review process is expected to take approximately four to five weeks.

Members expressed optimism that the webinar will be finalized and ready for release by October and noted that it will provide valuable information for providers.

2026 Employment First Council Annual Report Recommendations

The committee discussed planning for the 2026 Employment First Council Annual Report recommendations, which is due December 1, 2026. Members were informed that the Executive Committee will meet in July, August, and September to compile committee activities, accomplishments, and recommendations for inclusion in the report.

The 2026 Employment First Council Annual Report recommendations will remain a standing agenda item for future committee meetings. Members were encouraged to identify and share significant activities, outcomes, and recommendations throughout the year to support development of the final report.

Additional Announcements

- The committee was informed that a [New Autism Informed Employer video](#) was posted on June 16, 2026.
- The committee members were also reminded that the next Employment First Council Quarterly Meeting is scheduled for July 10, 2026, from 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM ET at the Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, Room 136 CE, 1st Floor, 500 Mero Street, Frankfort, KY 40601.

Public Comments

None

Adjournment

Employment First Committee Chair Shelly Durbin thanked everyone for their contribution and adjourned the meeting.

Next meeting

July 28, 2026
2:00pm – 3:00pm (EST)



Andy Beshear, Governor
Jamie Link, Education & Labor Cabinet Secretary
Employment First Council
500 Mero St., 1st Floor NE
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Kentucky Employment First Council

Public Policy Committee

Date: May 7, 2026

Location: Virtual Meeting

Time: 9:00am – 10:00am (EST)

Virtual Option: [Zoom Access](#)

1. **Welcome** (9:00am)

Presenter: Andrew Johnson, Committee Chair

2. **Order of Selection Update** (9:05am)

Presenter: OVR Staff

3. **Project NEON Update/Reminder** (9:10am)

Presenter: Jeff White, Vice-Chair and Committee Member

4. **OSERS Rule Update** (9:15am)

Presenter: Allison Johnson, Committee Member or Andrew Johnson, Committee Chair

5. IEP Guidance Workgroup Reminder (9:25am)

Participants: Andrew Johnson, Committee Chair

6. Open Discussion (9:35am)

Participants: Committee Members

7. Public Comment (9:55am)

Participants: Members of the public (up to 3 minutes per speaker)

8. Adjournment (10:00am)



Kentucky Employment First Council

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Andy Beshear

Governor

Jamie Link

Secretary, Education and Labor Cabinet

Employment First Council

Public Policy Committee

Minutes

May 7, 2026

9:00 am – 10:00 am (EST)

Zoom

Meeting ID: 817 4368 7977

Members' Present

Committee Chair/Legislative Liaison Andrew Johnson, Council Chair Katie Wolf Whaley, Council Vice Chair Jeff White, and Amy Luttrell

Members Absent

Susan Brown, Cora McNabb, and Leslie Hoffmann

Staff Present

Nanci Howard, Anu Kumari, and Holly Hendricks

Welcome | Agenda Review:

Committee Chair Andrew Johnson welcomed attendees, and the agenda was reviewed by all participants.

Order of Selection update

The Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation provided an update on the status of the Order of Selection (OOS) waitlist. The agency reported that the regulations have been finalized and are now publicly available for viewing.

As of the end of April, 5,648 individuals remained on the waitlist. On May 1, OVR removed 84 individuals from the waitlist and moved them into accepted status. These individuals were identified from Priority Category 1 based on the earliest application dates and are located throughout the state. Counselors were expected to begin contacting those individuals to start the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) process and initiate services. Plans must be completed within 90 days, although staff hoped services could begin sooner.

The agency will continue to monitor spending associated with newly accepted cases before making decisions about removing additional individuals from the waitlist. The agency reported that additional waitlist movement was not currently anticipated before implementation of the new case management system, which is scheduled for July. However, it was clarified that expenditures and funding availability are continuously monitored, and additional individuals could be moved from the waitlist sooner if funding and operational capacity allow. The agency indicated they expect to review spending again around early August, following implementation and training activities.

Case Management System:

The agency is preparing for the rollout of the new case management system and related staff training activities. Approximately 25–30 staff members will participate in Train-the-Trainer (T3) sessions in Louisville during the week of May 18. Those staff members will then provide statewide training to field staff during the first week of June. During that period, most field services staff will be unavailable for regular service delivery activities due to virtual training requirements. McDowell Center and Carl D. Perkins Vocational Training Center staff training will follow a staggered schedule to ensure continuity of services at those locations.

It was also reported that thousands of case files are currently being reviewed and updated to ensure accuracy prior to migration into the new system.

Funding and budget considerations were also discussed. It was clarified that funding remains available; however, varying case costs, staffing shortages, vacant positions, and implementation costs associated with the new case management system continue to impact budget planning and agency operations.

Committee Questions and Answers:

Question: *Clarification was requested regarding whether OVR intended to wait until after implementation of the new case management system before reviewing additional movement from the waitlist.*

Answer: It was clarified that spending is monitored on a weekly basis; however, newly accepted cases may not show significant expenditures for two to three months. It was clarified that clearer cost projections are expected around the end of July, following implementation of the new case management system and completion of statewide staff training activities.

Question: *A question was raised regarding whether the implementation of the new case management system was the primary reason additional individuals were not being removed from the waitlist and whether a long-term strategy existed for addressing the overall backlog.*

Answer: It was clarified that the system itself was not preventing movement from the waitlist. Staff capacity, file preparation, and case migration activities were identified as major operational factors. The expenditure and funding availability are continuously monitored, and additional individuals may be removed from the waitlist as fiscal and operational conditions allow

Question: *A question was raised regarding whether the agency was experiencing funding shortages and whether OVR anticipated fully expending its budget by the end of the fiscal year.*

Answer: It was clarified that funding is currently available; however, service costs vary significantly between cases, making expenditure forecasting complex. Staffing shortages and implementation costs associated with the new case management system continue to affect agency operations and budget planning. At this time, OVR does not anticipate fully expending the budget by the end of the fiscal year.

Question: *A question was raised regarding whether the OVR regulations remained in a public review period.*

Answer: It was clarified that the regulations are finalized and publicly available for viewing.

Project NEON Update/Reminder

Employment First Vice Chair/Committee Member, Jeff White, provided an update regarding ongoing activities under Project NEON. It was reported that most workgroups have continued organizational planning activities, while several groups have begun active project work.

Key priority areas:

Addressing the Impact of Wages on Benefits:

The Impact of Wages on Benefits workgroup identified the need for additional collaboration with the Department for Community Based Services (DCBS) due to the agency's role in programs such as SNAP and Kentucky Transitional Assistance Program (K-TAP). Efforts are underway through agency leadership to formally engage DCBS as an additional Project NEON collaborator. The workgroup is led by Donna Osburn.

The group has also begun developing Kentucky-specific benefits planning training materials. It was noted that existing benefits training programs provide comprehensive information regarding federal benefits; however, additional guidance related to state-administered programs is needed to support benefits planners and improve the accuracy of information provided to individuals and families.

Established Data Collection and Analysis Practices to Inform Future Decisions:

An update was also provided regarding statewide data collection and analysis efforts. Project NEON resources will be utilized to assess statewide data needs, evaluate current and previous initiatives, and identify opportunities to improve employment outcomes and service delivery across systems. It was noted that Kentucky intends to expand beyond standard system performance measures by incorporating broader data collection and analysis activities to help inform future decision-making. The workgroup is led by Jeff White, with subject matter expert Jessie Oettinger.

Additional discussion addressed Kentucky's upcoming participation in the State Employment Leadership Network (SELN) through the National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services (NASDDDS), effective July 1. It was reported that efforts are underway to coordinate SELN activities with existing Project NEON work to maximize opportunities for improved statewide data collection, system performance evaluation, and informed decision-making.

Successful Implementation of Kentucky's I-RISE Initiative and its Integration:

Continued support for the successful implementation and integration of Kentucky's 1915(i) I-RISE initiative, including opportunities to align housing stability, residential supports, and employment-related services through additional federal technical assistance partnerships.

Ensuring the delivery of High-Quality Employment Services:

Customized employment efforts continue to identify responsibilities that will fall under Project NEON compared to activities already occurring through existing employment initiatives and programs. The workgroup is led by Katie Wolf Whaley.

Increase the knowledge base of Case Manager and Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor:

It was reported that a multidisciplinary team has been assembled to support Project NEON activities, including case managers, rehabilitation counselors, family members, and self-advocates. Ongoing efforts continue to focus on increasing self-advocate involvement to ensure individuals receiving services have meaningful opportunities to provide input and help guide Project NEON activities and priorities.

Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services Rule Update

An update was provided regarding proposed federal rule changes associated with the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS). It was reported that the public comment period remains open through May 22, 2026.

Members expressed interest in continuing to monitor future federal guidance and potential impacts on state reporting and compliance activities.

IEP Guidance Workgroup Reminder

An update was provided on plans to begin an IEP Guidance Workgroup focused on identifying opportunities to incorporate Employment First concepts into IEP guidance discussions. Members interested in participating were asked to respond to the previously distributed email indicating their interest.

It was reported that initial activities will likely include a preliminary meeting to review the current landscape, discuss potential approaches, and identify possible next steps. Members were encouraged to participate as available, with additional opportunities for involvement expected as work progresses.

Open Discussion

During the open discussion, the committee discussed Workforce Pell and potential implications for workforce development and Employment First-related activities. It was noted that Workforce Pell is intended to expand financial aid opportunities for short-term credentialing and workforce training programs.

Members discussed whether education and training programs may adjust program structures to meet Workforce Pell eligibility requirements.

It was noted that additional conversations with workforce partners may occur as further federal guidance becomes available.

Additional Discussion

The committee discussed continued support for the implementation and integration of Kentucky's 1915(i) I-RISE initiative. It was noted that Kentucky is now eligible to participate in the Housing Services Partnership Accelerator 2026 Cohort through its participation as NEON state. The initiative involves technical assistance partnerships with the Housing and Services Resource Center, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the U.S. Department of Labor.

Public Comments

None.

Adjournment

Employment First Committee Chair Andrew Johnson thanked everyone for their contribution and adjourned the meeting.

Next Meeting Date

June 18, 2026

9:00 am- 10:00am (EST)



Andy Beshear, Governor
Jamie Link, Education & Labor Cabinet Secretary
Employment First Council
500 Mero St., 1st Floor NE
Frankfort, KY 40601
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Kentucky Employment First Council

Transition Committee

Date: April 2, 2026

Location: Virtual Meeting

Time: 9:30am – 10:30am (EST)

Virtual Option: [Zoom Access](#)

1. Welcome (9:30am)

Presenter: Tal Curry, Transition Committee Chair

2. Update on Advocacy and Education Committee Collaboration (9:35am)

Presenter: Tal Curry, Transition Committee Chair

3. Transition Distribution List and Dissemination Plan - Document Review (9:40am)

Presenter: Tal Curry, Transition Committee Chair

4. Transition Distribution List and Dissemination Plan Discussion (9:50am)

Participants: Committee Members

5. Public Comment *(10:20am)*

Participants: Members of the public (up to 3 minutes per speaker)

6. Adjournment *(10:30am)*

Employment First Council

Transition Committee Meeting Minutes

April 2, 2026

9:30 am – 10:30 am (EST)

Zoom

Meeting ID: 859 9250 0062

Members' Present

Chair Tal Curry, Council Chair Katie Wolf Whaley, Rhonda Logsdon, Stacie Hutchison, Sara Tinker, Jason Wheatley/Proxy Gretta Hylton, Johnny Callebs, Larry Taylor, and Zac Sappenfield

Members Absent

Susan Brown

Staff Present

Jonathan White and Anu Kumari

Staff Absent

Nanci Howard

Welcome | Introduction | Agenda Review

Employment First Transition Committee Chair, Tal Curry, welcomed attendees, and introductions were conducted. The agenda was reviewed and acknowledged by all participants.

Update on Advocacy and Education Committee Collaboration

The committee discussed ongoing collaboration between the Advocacy and Education Committee and the Transition Committee to improve communication and dissemination of Employment First resources. Discussion focused on how information should be shared and presented.

Key discussion points included:

- Using a content calendar approach as a strategy to organize communication efforts.
- Emphasis on sharing information in bite-sized, accessible formats to improve engagement.
- Discussion of utilizing existing toolkits and sample messaging to support consistent communication.

Additional approaches included sharing information through links, smaller content segments, and partner networks to improve accessibility and broaden reach.

The committee discussed leveraging existing partner networks and platforms, noting established audiences and communication channels. Collaboration between Kentucky SPIN and the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR), including recent resource-sharing efforts, was also discussed.

Transition Distribution List and Dissemination Plan-Document Review

The committee reviewed a draft “Transition Distribution List and Dissemination Plan” document intended to support more coordinated communication across stakeholders.

Key points included:

- Review of a proposed distribution list structure (organization name, contact person, email, and communication channels).
- Identification of designated points of contact within each organization.
- Recommendation to use a shared, collaborative platform (e.g., Google Docs) for ongoing updates.
- Consideration of multiple communication methods (listservs, newsletters, websites, and social media) and establishing clear definitions.
- Recognition of the need for an environmental scan to identify additional stakeholders and categorizing organizations to support targeted communication.
- Emphasis on maintaining accurate and up-to-date contact information.

Transition Distribution List and Dissemination Plan Discussion

The committee further discussed the development and implementation of the dissemination plan.

Key discussion points included:

- Recognition of the need for structure and organization of the communication plan.
- Emphasis on shared ownership across partners.
- Support for identifying primary and backup contacts.
- Using a collaborative platform for real-time updates.
- Utilizing multiple communication channels to expand reach.
- Categorize stakeholders for targeted dissemination.
- The distribution plan will function as a living document requiring ongoing updates.

The committee recognized that organizations operate under varying policies and capacities, and not all partners may be able to share all materials; therefore, a flexible, collaborative approach will be maintained.

The committee emphasized the need for Employment First content to be housed in a centralized, accessible, and flexible online platform, supporting dynamic and accessible information rather than static documents.

The committee supported the development of a coordinated, intentional, and partner-driven communication framework.

Additional Discussion:

Announcement:

- An announcement was shared regarding staffing changes within the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR): Veronica Dale has retired, and Beth McDaniel was named the new Transition Services Branch Manager, effective March 16.
- An update was provided on the implementation of [\(SPARK\) Supporting Postsecondary Achievement and Resources for Kentucky students with disabilities](#) grants, with participating districts actively forming local transition teams and initiating project activities.

- It was shared that GRREC will host its final Regional Interagency Transition Team meeting on April 21. The meeting will include mental health therapists from WKU’s Circle of Support program, followed by a student roundtable discussion and a focus on youth autonomy and decision-making.
- The Employment First Council Quarterly Meeting is scheduled for Friday, April 10, 2026, from 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM (Eastern Time). The meeting will be held in a hybrid format, with an in-person option at the Mayo-Underwood Building in Frankfort, KY.

Next Steps

- Transition Committee members will access the shared [Google Doc](#) and enter information in a few fields by the close of business on April 9, 2026, as a test to ensure access and usability prior to the April 10 Council meeting.
- On or after April 10, members will enter all dissemination contact information, including suggested agencies and organizations, into the Google Doc by the close of business on May 7, 2026, allowing time for review and updates before the May 14 Transition Committee meeting.

Public Comments

None.

Adjournment

Employment First Committee Chair, Tal Curry, thanked everyone for their contribution and adjourned the meeting.

Next Meeting Date

Thursday, May 14, 2026
9:30 am- 10:30 am (EST)



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

Transition Committee

Date: May 14, 2026

Location: Virtual Meeting

Time: 9:30am – 10:30am (EST)

Virtual Option: [Zoom Access](#)

1. **Welcome (9:30am)**

Presenter: Tal Curry, Transition Committee Chair

2. **Update on Advocacy and Education Committee Collaboration (9:35am)**

Presenter: Tal Curry, Transition Committee Chair

3. **Update on the Transition Resource Sheet (9:40am)**

Presenter: Tal Curry, Transition Committee Chair

4. **Transition Distribution List and Dissemination Plan - Document Review (9:45am)**

Presenter: Tal Curry, Transition Committee Chair

5. Transition Distribution List and Dissemination Plan Discussion (9:55am)

Participants: Committee Members

6. Public Comment (10:20am)

Participants: Members of the public (up to 3 minutes per speaker)

7. Adjournment (10:30am)



Kentucky Employment First Council

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Andy Beshear

Governor

Jamie Link

Secretary, Education and Labor Cabinet

Employment First Council

Transition Committee Meeting Minutes

May 14, 2026

9:30 am – 10:30 am (EST)

Zoom

Meeting ID: 859 9250 0062

Members' Present

Chair Tal Curry, Sara Tinker, Jason Wheatley/Proxy Gretta Hylton, Johnny Callebs, and Zac Sappenfield.

Members Absent

Katie Wolf Whaley, Rhonda Logsdon, and Larry Taylor.

Staff Present

Jonathan White, Nanci Howard, and Anu Kumari.

Welcome | Introduction | Agenda Review

Employment First Transition Committee Chair, Tal Curry, welcomed attendees, and introductions were conducted. The agenda was reviewed and acknowledged by all participants.

Update on Advocacy and Education Committee Collaboration

The committee received an update regarding the ongoing activities of the Advocacy and Education Committee. The committee previously discussed the development of a distribution list and strategies for sharing Employment First information with partners and

stakeholders. At this time, the committee has shifted its focus toward development of newsletter inserts related to Employment First initiatives.

Key Highlights

The committee is developing brief newsletter inserts for potential approval through Cabinet Communications.

It was recommended that the newsletter inserts be included in the Kentucky Department of Education and Career and Technical Education newsletters. Draft examples of the newsletter inserts are currently in development and may be presented to the Employment First Council for review at a future meeting.

The Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document remains posted on the Employment First website; however, updates to several links are needed.

The committee is working with staff from the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation to transition the FAQ document into an HTML format to improve accessibility and simplify future maintenance and link updates.

Update on the Transition Resource Sheet

The Transition Resource Sheet was provided in the chat box and also updated on the KY Advisory Council on Autism website at [Transition Resource Sheet for Students with Disabilities](#). An accessible version remains on the website at [Transition Planning Resources – KYACA](#)

The purpose of this hyperlinked document is to support youth and families to make informed decisions about transition services for students with disabilities and is to be shared with youth prior to and during 504/IEP meetings (ages 13/14 to 18/21).

At the end of the two-page document is survey link. [Transition Resource Sheet Survey](#)

The committee was reminded that the most recent version of the resource sheet was dated February 13, 2026, and links had been shared for members who may not have been familiar with the resource. It was noted that the resource sheet could be included within future Advocacy and Education Committee newsletter inserts distributed to educators and other partners.

Top Transition Planning Resources

- [University of Kentucky Human Development Institute \(UK HDI\)](#)
- [Youth & Adults Suite – KY-SPIN](#)
- [Vocational Rehabilitation \(VR\) Transition Services for Students](#)

Transition Distribution List and Dissemination Plan-Document Review

The committee reviewed a draft “Transition Distribution List and Dissemination Plan” document intended to support more coordinated communication across stakeholders.

Key Highlights

The distribution list would be used to share transition-related resources through agency newsletters, listservs, social media platforms, and partner communication channels.

The draft document included organization types, contact information, websites, social media platforms, and assigned committee members responsible for maintaining contact information.

The committee emphasized the importance of maintaining updated contact information and developing a regular review schedule to ensure the document remains current and effective. Discussion included assigning responsibility to committee members for maintaining contact information for designated organizations and communication partners.

The committee discussed using the next Transition Committee meeting on June 25th as a target date for committee members to review and update assigned contact information within the distribution document. Reminder communications would also be sent prior to the meeting by the Administrator.

Transition Distribution List and Dissemination Plan Discussion

The committee further discussed implementation of the dissemination plan and strategies for statewide resource sharing.

Key Highlights

Utilizing partner organizations, newsletters, listservs, social media platforms, and existing communication channels to distribute transition-related resources statewide.

Identifying agency contacts, communications staff, division representatives, and community partners who could support dissemination efforts.

Establishing an ongoing review and maintenance process for the distribution document. Supporting long-term communication efforts and reducing the need to recreate distribution lists for future initiatives.

Additional Discussion

Announcement

An announcement was shared regarding the new Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) case management system. It was reported that the new system is anticipated to go live in mid-July. OVR staff training is scheduled during the first week of June, during which time staff availability may be limited while agency-wide training is completed.

Next Steps

The Administrator will send the [Google Doc](#) to committee members for review and updates prior to the next Transition Committee meeting on June 25th and will distribute reminder communications with future meeting materials and agendas.

Committee members will continue reviewing and updating organization contacts, communication channels, and assigned responsibilities within the Transition Distribution List and Dissemination Plan document.

Public Comments

None.

Adjournment

Employment First Committee Chair, Tal Curry, thanked everyone for their contribution and adjourned the meeting.

Next Meeting Date

Thursday, June 25, 2026
9:30 am- 10:30 am (EST)