



Andy Beshear
Governor

Jamie Link
Education & Labor Cabinet Secretary

Provider Capacity Committee Meeting Minutes

January 14, 2024

2:00pm – 3:00pm

[Zoom Link](#)

Meeting ID: 826 3266 4774

Passcode: 622964

Members Present: Jeff White, Katie Wolf Whaley, Todd Coffey, Shelly Durbin, Cathy Anderson, Amanda Hutchison, Melanie Lybarger, Zac Sappenfield, and Lisa Carrico.

Staff Present: Nanci Howard KYOVR Administrator and Anu Kumari, Administrative Specialist Senior.

Members Absent: Staci Cain, Cora McNabb, Leslie Hoffmann, Annette Jett, Lori Norton, and Ron O'Hair, KYOVR CRP/SE Branch Manager.

Welcome: Administrator, Nanci Howard and chair, Jeff White welcomed everyone to the meeting. The agenda was reviewed by all participants.

Project NEON Update: KYOVR Administrator Nanci Howard provided an update on Project NEON, the National Expansion of Employment Opportunities Network.

- **Technical Assistance Grant:** Received in 2022 from the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy.
- **Past Support:** Used 100 hours of assistance in 2022 to support the Employment First Council.
- **Rate Revamp Efforts:** In 2023, received 300 hours to focus on improving Supported Employment rates.
- **2024 Assistance:** Applied for 300 hours, received 200 hours for continued improvements.
- **Expert Collaboration:** Working with Karen Lee and Michael Dalto on customized employment, supported employment, and benefits planning.
- **Upcoming Project NEON Call:** Scheduled for January 23rd at 10:00 AM, Nanci encouraged participation.
- **Recognition of Contributions:** Acknowledged efforts from Katie Wolf Whaley, Jeff White, and other council members.
- **Call to Action:** Emphasized the importance of participation in Project NEON to support employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

Review of New Provider Recruitment/ Provider Expansion Efforts: Chair, Jeff White discussed efforts to recruit and expand new providers. A recruitment email was sent to 405 waiver provider agency contacts, and he confirmed that most attendees had received it. He highlighted a positive response from an established employment agency that expressed interest in expanding to underserved areas, should other agencies consider assistance by sharing office space. Jeff elaborated on the initial feedback to the service expansion outreach, noting that some existing providers may seek stronger ties with OVR, the challenge remains in identifying new and additional employment providers across the state. While the initial suggestion was unexpected, case management agencies sharing office space with providers to establish employment services in underserved areas may be worth further exploration. He expressed optimism about the expansion opportunity, describing it as the most promising initiative he has seen in his career. Jeff offered his assistance to anyone needing help contacting potential partners and emphasized the importance of providing clear and actionable information to enable providers to make informed business decisions. He concluded his report with a sense of hope for a productive follow-up period based on the positive responses received.

Discussion of How We Might Proceed from Here:

1. **Increase Funding and Resources:** Chair Jeff White led a discussion on expanding supported employment services.
 - **Alignment with Existing Efforts:** He shared a list of actions that align with work by the Employment First Council, OVR, and DDID.
 - **Funding and Resources:** A key suggestion was to increase funding and resources for these services.
 - **Waiver Improvements:** Jeff provided an update on efforts to enhance the (I) waiver, aiming for implementation by July 1, 2025.
 - **Private Partnerships & Technology:** While there are some limitations, efforts are underway to secure more funding, add waiver slots, and strengthen waiver operations.

2. **Enhance Workforce Training:** Chair Jeff White emphasized the importance of expanding workforce training.
 - **SETP Staff Expansion:** The Supported Employment Training Project (SETP) is growing, with Katie Wolf Whaley playing a key role.
 - **Quality Assistance at DDID:** Efforts are being made to improve quality assistance at DDID.
 - **Training Improvements:** While formal credentialing is not yet available, SETP is working to enhance customized employment training.
 - **New Trainer:** Zac Sappenfield, a new SETP training facilitator, has relevant certifications and experience in customized employment.
 - **Upcoming Project NEON Meeting:** Katie Wolf Whaley will attend a meeting on January 23, 2025, with Karen Lee to discuss customized employment.
 - **Online Training Development:** Continuing the collaboration with Trisha Parkins - Jones from Utah could create an alternative to the current full Mark Gold and Associates certification.

3. **Enhance Workforce Outreach:** Chair, Jeff White led a conversation on expanding employer outreach efforts.
 - **Ongoing Initiatives:** He acknowledged the work of the Employer Education and Engagement Committee and the Advocacy and Education Committee.
 - **FAQ Document:** A new FAQ document was created to ask employers if they would consider hiring individuals with developmental or intellectual disabilities.
 - **Encouraging Employer Engagement:** It was noted that simply asking this question, as UPS did, could prompt employers to consider hiring individuals with disabilities.
 - **Building Business Networks:** Todd Coffey suggested using Greater Louisville Inc. and local Chambers of Commerce to connect with more companies.
 - **Easy Access to Resources:** Katie Wolf Whaley emphasized the need to make employer resources easily accessible.
 - **Strategic Plan Inclusion:** Jeff White mentioned that the DDID strategic plan includes hiring individuals with disabilities.

4. **Leverage Technology:** Chair, Jeff White began the focuses on the difficulties in connecting individuals with disabilities to employment opportunities and explores potential solutions.
 - He addressed the crucial question raised by Katie ‘how to find individuals with disabilities who want to work’?
 - Jeff suggested leveraging technology like online job portals and virtual training programs, acknowledging limitations in developing such platforms in-house.
 - An alternative could include creating a system to directly connect job seekers with employers.

5. **Strengthen Community Collaboration:** Chair, Jeff White stressed the need for better cooperation with state agencies and improving services in underserved areas.
 - **Employment Funding Issues:** Discussed difficulties in using Medicaid and OVR funds due to a lack of service providers.

- **Proposed Solution:** Suggested using waiver funding when OVR services are unavailable, in a particular area even though the consumer may be eligible to receive them.
 - **Provider Expansion:** Sought feedback from Melanie Lyberger on encouraging providers to work in underserved areas.
 - **Using Person Directed Services (PDS):** Discussed PDS as an option when no other services are available but raised concerns about quality and oversight.
6. **Expand Service Offerings:** The conversation shifted to the broader issue of quality control and oversight.
- **Expanding PDS Services:** Melanie suggested a mentoring program to support individuals using PDS.
 - **Oversight Concerns:** Jeff White and Lisa Carrico questioned whether developing PDS services was worthwhile compared to expanding CRPs.
 - **Balancing Demand & Quality:** Acknowledged some individuals want PDS for employment, but quality oversight remains a concern.
 - **Future Steps:** DAIL involvement will be necessary to finalize decisions on PDS and CRP expansion.
 - **Access for State Guardianship Individuals:** Jeff White emphasized the need for better resources and outreach efforts to support individuals under State Guardianship.
7. **Advocate for Policy Change:** Chair, Jeff White discussed ongoing opportunities for policy change.
- Opportunity to do more with the 14(c) on a Federal Level.
 - APSE advocacy efforts to provide input to decision makers to the 14(c) issue.
 - He said 14(c) Certificates noted minimal impact in Kentucky due to existing salary structures since Covid.
 - Movement on waiver regulations to ensure it is more attuned to Employment First.
 - He stated he hopes to use NEON hours to assist individuals who are at the high end of eligibility spectrum that may need assistance to maintain eligibility of Medicaid through a restructuring of the Medicaid Buy-in.
8. **Promote Awareness:** Chair, Jeff White emphasized the Advocacy and Education's committee's role in raising awareness and utilizing success stories to showcase the capabilities of individuals with disabilities.
9. **Monitor and Evaluate Programs:** Chair, Jeff White emphasized the need for improved data collection systems to track the success of employment programs.
- **Challenges in Data Accuracy:** Katie Wolf Whaley noted issues with overlapping systems and different definitions of employment services.
 - **Underreporting Issues:** Jeff highlighted gaps in reporting, where actual job placements were higher than recorded data.
 - **Better Data Sharing:** Suggested improving OVR and waiver program data sharing to track employment outcomes more accurately.
 - **Exploring New Data Methods:** Proposed contacting KY/Stats regarding web platforms to improve data collection.

- **Employer Feedback Loops:** Amanda Hutchison stressed the need for actionable feedback, not just surface-level responses.
- **Right Metrics for Tracking:** Katie Wolf Whaley called for better data collection beyond general census numbers.
- **Strategic Planning for Data Systems:** Jeff White recommended careful planning before investing in a statewide data system.
- **Using Existing VR Data:** Todd Coffey suggested leveraging VR data on candidates, employment status, and provider availability.
- **Data Challenges & Solutions:** Jeff White commented that reformatting OVR and Medicaid data with expert help.
- **Identifying Job Seekers:** Todd Coffey emphasized the need to track the progress of the 15,000-17,000 job-seeking candidates statewide.
- **Starting with Key Data:** Lisa Carrico suggested focusing on supported employment data and waiting lists first.
- **Defining Data Needs:** Katie Wolf Whaley stressed aligning data collection with employment metrics.
- **Data Collection Support:** Nanci Howard offered to obtain needed data if given a list of specific questions.
- **Next Steps:** Todd Coffey will help Jeff White formulate the right questions to guide data collection efforts.

Employment First Council's Advocacy & Ed. Nanci Howard, OVR Administrator Committee – FAQ Document Provider Section Review:

KYOVR Administrator, Nanci Howard stated that the Council's Advocacy and Education Committee developed a top five FAQ document based on input from self-advocates with disabilities and service providers. A [Google Doc](#) shared via email, is open for committee review and for feedback. Nanci explained how the document was created during the January 10th, 2025, full council meeting and shared the next steps. These include getting approval from the full council and then presenting it through cabinet communications. The goal is to create a document branded under "Employment First". She encouraged anyone with questions or suggestions to reach out to her or Amanda Owen, the committee chair.

2025 Annual Report Recommendations: KYOVR Administrator, Nanci Howard, stated that she will maintain a running list of recommendations from various committees throughout the year and standing agenda item will be added to track progress toward the annual report's goals. Council Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley, suggested highlighting the Support and Employment Training Project's hiring of four new full-time staff members to provide technical assistance to providers across the Commonwealth state. Katie also recommended including the Advocacy and Education Committee, Amanda Owen's presentation on the role of providers and Employment First in the annual report, potentially as a collaborative effort from the committee.

Public Comments: No Public Comment addressed.

Adjournment

Chair, Jeff White and Administrator, Nanci Howard thanked everyone for their contributions and adjourned the meeting.

Next Meeting:

- **Date: April 17,2025**
- **Time: 2:00 pm to 3:00 pm**



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