



Andy Beshear
Governor

Jamie Link
Education and Labor Cabinet Secretary

Public Policy Committee

Minutes

February 13th, 2025
9:00am – 10:00am

Attendees:

Diana Merzweiler, Committee Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley, Council Chair, Jeff White, Andrew Johnson, Amy Luttrell, and Justin Jeter

Staff Attendees:

Nanci Howard, KYOVR Administrator, Holly Hendricks, KYOVR Division Director, Betty Whittaker, KYOVR Staff Assistant, and Anu Kumari, KYOVR Administrative Specialist Senior

Members Absent:

McNabb Cora, Gretta Hylton/Proxy, Luv Tesha Robertson, and Allison Johnson

Welcome/Announcement:

KYOVR Administrator, Nanci Howard and Committee Chair, Diana Merzweiler welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Project NEON Updates:

- KYOVR Administrator, Nanci Howard announced that new point of contact, Staff Assistant Betty Whitaker managing Project NEON for KYOVR.

- KYOVR Staff Assistant, Betty Whittaker shared updates on meetings with Subject Matter Experts (SMEs), Karen Lee and Michael Dalto to discuss the project's allotted 200 hours.
- Betty will be collaborating with council member, Jeff White, KYOVR Supported Employment/CRP Branch Manager, Ron O Hair and KYOVR Administrator, Donna Osburn for their expertise on the Project NEON.
- Nanci Howard mentioned council member, Amy Luttrell and Justin Jeter's involvement in Project NEON and Office of Disability and Employment Policy (ODEP), highlighting their contributions as well. Nanci Howard stated that the Project NEON is expected to end by August 2025.
- Jeff White suggested the development of the Memorandum of Understanding between OVR and BHDID and additional agencies might be more of a long-term project rather than using Project NEON hours.
- Betty Whittaker noted her communication with Karen Lee focused on SME hour allocation but had no contact with Trisha Jones-Parkin. Betty suggested a meeting with Karen and Trisha to clarify the process and determine next steps.
- KYOVR Staff Assistant, Betty Whittaker explained the plan proposed by Project NEON's SME Karen Lee and Trisha Jones-Parkin will focus on building capacity and providing customized employment in Kentucky, including detailed action items. Michael Dalto will focus on increasing benefits support for OVR, including customizing and delivering basic training on SSDI and SSI work incentives, improving Medicaid, and providing training on Kentucky-specific benefits for benefits planners.
- Katie Wolf Whaley expressed interest in being part of upcoming future discussions customized employment conversations.

CIE Definition Legislation Update:

- KYOVR Administrator, Nanci Howard provided an update on the competitive integrated employment definition that was approved and submitted by the Council. She reported there are no new developments or movement. Nanci concluded her report by agreeing to continue to provide updates to the committee as they arise.

Kentucky Department of Education – Educator Training Modules/IEP Document Review:

In the absence of KDE staff, Allison Johnson, Council Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley provided an update regarding the KDE educator training modules.

- Two subgroups were formed:
 - Transition - Curriculum

- IEP Document Review: Meeting scheduled for next week with interested members.

Benefit Cliff/Medicaid Discussion:

- Council Member Amy Luttrell led the discussion regarding the benefits cliff and Medicaid Buy-In. She announced there was a meeting conducted on January 23, 2025, in regard to the Project NEON and are awaiting guidance.

Medicaid Buy-In & Legislative Discussion:

- Jeff White shared with the committee [web documents](#) from the Tennessee Medicaid Buy-In policy.

Benefit Cliff Legislation and Medicaid Funding Discussion:

- Amy Luttrell clarified there has been no progress reported this session.
- Committee Member, Justin Jeter, said legislators anticipate major federal Medicaid funding changes. He shared a presentation regarding this information in the chat.
- Amy and Justin agreed that monitoring Medicaid developments is essential before moving forward.
- Council Member, Jeff White clarified that the opioid research grant is significantly impacted by the new federal cap on indirect expenses for grant-funded activities.

Additional Discussion on Federal Executive Orders:

- The committee discussed monitoring policy changes and executive orders. Committee Member, Justin Jeter highlighted a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) related order that may impact hiring practices for individuals with intellectual disabilities.

2025 Annual Report Recommendations:

- KYOVR Administrator, Nanci Howard requested recommendations for the 2025 Annual Report. Chair, Diana Merzweiler stated that the committee plans to collect bullet points monthly or quarterly. Additional, items such as legislative language change surrounding competitive integrated employment and the approval of Project NEON hours. Diana highlighted that most recommendations are still in progress.

Public Comment:

No public comment addressed.

Adjournment:

Chair, Diana Merzweiler thanked everyone for their contribution and adjourned the meeting with a reminder of the next meeting date.

Next Meeting:

Date: March 13th, 2025

Time: 9:00 am to 10:00 am

Administrator: Nanci Howard

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