



Andy Beshear
Governor

Jamie Link
Education and Labor Cabinet Secretary

Transition Committee

Minutes
January 30, 2025
9:30am – 10:30am (EST)
Zoom

Members Present:

Interim Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley, Todd Coffey, Johnny Calles, Tal Curry, Zac Sappenfield, Amanda Hutchison, and Sara Tinker.

Members Absent:

Diana Merzweiler, Larry Taylor and Frank Huffman.

Staff Present:

Nanci Howard, Vocational Rehabilitation Administrator, Jonathan White, KYOVR Assistant Director, and Anu Kumari, Administrative Specialist Senior.

Welcome/Introduction:

Interim Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley and Administrator, Nanci Howard welcomed members to the meeting. Katie introduced Sara Tinker, a Cooperative Consultant with Greater Louisville Education Cooperative in Jefferson County. After Introductions, the agenda was reviewed by all participants.

Review of Education Section of the Advocacy Committee's FAQ on Employment First:

Interim Chair Katie Wolf Whaley reviewed the FAQ template with the committee, explaining that the Advocacy and Education Committee has been developing the document. Committee Chair, Amanda Owen drafted the initial questions and answers, and each committee will provide input on their respective topics. A Google Doc link to the document was shared via email for review and feedback.

Below are the questions contained in the FAQ document that pertains to educational professionals and the committee suggestions/comments.

FAQ Document Review and Discussion:

Educational Professionals

What is Employment First, and how does it impact my work as a professional in this field?

Answer: Employment First statute prioritizes competitive integrated employment as the first option for individuals with disabilities. Education professionals can help set this expectation by ensuring inclusion throughout education and creating expectations that life after school will include employment, as it does for other students. This priority should be included in the discussion around setting goals for transition into adulthood.

Committee Suggestions:

The committee reviewed the FAQ for educational professionals about Employment First, noting concerns about the clarity of "competitive integrated employment" (CIE) and suggesting clear examples for educators, focusing on the basics. They emphasized the need for well-defined terms, proposing a dedicated definitions page with accessible explanations and a fact sheet.

The committee emphasized the importance of using a plain language definition of CIE, to ensure clarity. They also advocated for the principle of "earlier and more often," suggesting that employment-related concepts should be introduced before high school to give students enough time to explore career options.

How do I assist individuals with disabilities in preparing for employment?

Answer: You can assist by conducting assessments of their skills and interests, developing individualized employment plans, providing job readiness training, and connecting them with supported employment services that match their goals. You can use the [UK - HDI Transition Checklists](#) as a tool to think about how to build vocational inventories and skills across grade levels.

You can think about how to implement key pieces of the transition process within your

curriculum around the five targeted areas of Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS): Job exploration counseling, Work based learning experiences, post-secondary opportunities, work readiness training, and self-advocacy instruction. [Pre-ETS flier](#) can help you connect students with Kentucky's Vocational Rehabilitation system and [this website can help you better understand Pre ETS](#) how they can benefit your students.

Committee Suggestions:

The committee discussed the need to clarify the language around Pre-ETS (Pre-Employment Transition Services) in schools, emphasizing the importance of defining specialized terms for teachers and families. Understanding of Pre-ETS varies by school level, and the checklists were mentioned as helpful resources. The committee questioned how to signal this information, such as the checklists, to help educational professionals with current work initiatives already used in the classroom. The committee discussed who that point of contact would be; teacher, guidance counselor, etc.

Discussion was then held regarding concerns about introducing Pre-ETS too late in high school. Some members suggested starting in middle school, while KYOVR Assistant Director Jonathan White proposed even earlier exposure. The committee explored ways to introduce related concepts before age 14. Discussion was held regarding how to connect teachers/educators to programs such as Pre-ETS, that happen outside of school hours.

Jonathan White then announced he has been working in collaboration with the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) for the past couple of years regarding a pilot program in six to eight school districts. He explained the purpose of the pilot program is to provide guidance for collaboration between the local school districts and the local KYOVR offices. Essentially, there will be written guidance that can take students and educators through the process from age 14 and up. Additionally, the intent is to also how to contact their local KYOVR office and how to assist with attending ARC meetings. The pilot school districts chosen were targeted geographically in both urban and rural areas.

How can I promote Employment First with my students and their families?

Answer: As an educator, Employment First requires prioritizing employment for individuals with disabilities. This begins with maximizing inclusion efforts throughout the student's educational career and creating expectations that life after school will include employment, as it does for other students. You can start conversations around the job search process by sharing resources such as this on how to get help finding a job.

Committee Suggestions:

The Committee suggested adding the HDI Checklists here for a resource to educational professionals.

How can I effectively educate and guide the student and/or guardian to help them prepare for employment after high school?

Answer: Stay focused on building skills leading to employment and discussing employment from an early age within ARC meetings. Some suggestions for implementation include regularly including employment planning in conversations, offering age-appropriate career exploration within the classroom but also sharing information with the family and student, collaborating with vocational rehabilitation services, creating workplace simulation environments, and supporting work-based learning opportunities.

Transition discussions should focus on offering integrated employment opportunities, ensuring access to job coaching, and eliminating barriers that prevent individuals from working in their communities. Transition present levels section within the IEP should highlight student interests and strengths. It should also discuss key employability skill development areas such as social communication, self-advocacy, technology literacy, time management, and following workplace instructions.

Successful implementation requires coordinated efforts among special education teachers, general educators, school counselors, rehabilitation specialists, families, and community employment providers. It may be helpful to share [resources that include ideas for families and students to think about employment](#) or to share [examples of other people with disabilities who are successfully employed.](#)

Committee Suggestions

The committee discussed ways to assist teachers with best practices so they can better inform parents and students of the opportunities before completing an IEP or Individual Learning Plan. Some committee members expressed challenges due to inconsistencies with education titles across the state. Sara Tinker said some school districts have Directors of Special Education while some have teams, such as Jefferson County.

- Include a link to the council approved document on “How to get help Finding a Job”, which teachers can share with families to connect students to employment opportunities early.
- The "present levels" section should highlight student interests and strengths, but this is often underutilized. Adding examples could make this section more effective and accessible for educators.
- It's beneficial to share topic-specific resources (like a checklist or guide), update them as needed, and highlight them for teachers, as they can be useful in many ways to ensure consistent support for students' transition goals.

Transition 360 Course and IPE Guidance Document Review:

Interim Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley provided an update, mentioned a meeting with Allison Johnson about the Transition 360 course and the upcoming IEP review. She highlighted that significant feedback had been received on the Transition 360 course, but more input was still needed.

Public Comment:

No public comment addressed.

Adjournment:

Interim Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley thanked everyone and adjourned the meeting.

Next Meeting:

- Date: March 27, 2025
- Time: 9:30am to 10:30am (EST)

Administrator: Nanci Howard

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