

Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Partnerships in Employment Systems Change Project Semi-Annual State Profile



What is the Partnerships in Employment Project?

5-year grant awarded to 14 states: The Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AIDD) awarded funding to eight states in 2011 and 2012, and six states in 2016: *District of Columbia, Hawaii, Kentucky, Massachusetts, South Carolina, and Utah.*

Focus on competitive integrated employment for youth with I/DD: This project promotes cross-systems and cross-agency collaboration to improve competitive integrated employment outcomes for youth and young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). *Competitive integrated employment (CIE)* is when “individuals with disabilities earn wages consistent with wages paid workers without disabilities in the community performing the same or similar work.”

States form consortiums: The six 2016 Partnerships in Employment states formed a consortium or coalition of stakeholders that include:

- ▶ **Individual Level:** Individuals with I/DD, family members
- ▶ **Community Level:** Pilot sites, employers, providers
- ▶ **State Level:** Developmental Disabilities Agency, Vocational Rehabilitation Agency, State Education Agency, State Developmental Disabilities Council, other state agencies

AIDD contractors perform project evaluation and provide technical assistance: The Lewin Group is conducting a comprehensive, longitudinal evaluation and the Youth Employment Solutions (YES)! Center is providing training and technical assistance to states.

KentuckyWorks: October 2016 – August 2018

Overview

The Human Development Institute at the University of Kentucky (HDI) was awarded the Partnerships in Employment (PIE) grant in September 2016. HDI, a University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD), is leading KentuckyWorks in collaboration with the Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR), Department of Education (KDE), Division of Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities, Protection and Advocacy, Office for the Blind, Office of Autism, Autism Training Center, and the Commonwealth Council on Developmental Disabilities. The project will focus on increasing positive post-school outcomes for students with the most significant disabilities ages 18 to 21 and impacting youth employment in all 174 school districts.

Project Goals and Vision

KentuckyWorks has several project goals, including:

1. Establish a state-level employment work group with consortium members, self-advocates, family members, and Kentucky’s nine Regional Special Education Cooperatives that will conduct a statewide needs assessment
2. Conduct annual, consistent professional development and Communities of Practice focused on implementing evidence-based transition services
3. Develop and distribute resources to families and students with I/DD, employers, and service providers
4. Annually track and evaluate post-school outcomes for students with disabilities

This profile highlights KentuckyWorks activities and accomplishments from October 2016 to August 2018 related to PIE project objectives—developing or changing policies, removing systemic barriers, building cross-system and cross-agency collaboration, and implementing strategies and promising practices to support CIE. For a full list of all activities and outcomes, please refer to previous PIE Semi-Annual Reports.

Policy Development

State and Federal Policies and Initiatives

Medicaid Waivers

During the April 2017 to August 2017 reporting period, KentuckyWorks created a document providing guidelines for an annual orientation to employment for Medicaid waiver participants. The document includes information on Customized and Supported Employment, person-centered job selection, job development, job training and stabilization, long-term employment supports, participant directed services, and associated rates and limitations.

On a quarterly basis, KentuckyWorks partners conduct a six-day Vocational Rehabilitation/Medicaid waiver employment training for approximately 45 staff members. The trainings include three two-day sessions each month. In addition, approximately eight employment specialists participate in a leadership training to provide Discovery services.

Employment First Policy

Employment First Executive Order and Work Matters

In 2016 and 2017, the KentuckyWorks Policy Work Team met to draft an Executive Order. The goals of the Executive Order are to:

1. Recognize the existence of KentuckyWorks
2. Indicate that state policy is Employment First for people with I/DD

One staff member had a coordinating role and the other staff members provided written input until a consensus was reached. The Executive Order was submitted to the Governor's Office for review in March 2017.

After submission of the draft Employment First Executive Order, the governor of Kentucky announced the formation of a cabinet-level group, Work Matters, responsible for the expansion of employment outcomes for all citizens of Kentucky. A sub-committee also formed to address employment outcomes for people with I/DD. The majority of the Work Matters members are KentuckyWorks consortium members.

KentuckyWorks formally presented the PIE project and policy recommendations to Work Matters and offered to provide operational leadership to the Employment First effort. During the September 2017 to February 2018 reporting period, the KentuckyWorks disability subcommittee, the Disability Work Team, held a series of meetings that resulted in the endorsement of KentuckyWorks' request for an Executive Order.

On May 15, 2018, the governor of Kentucky signed an Employment First Executive Order. The Executive Order makes HDI, a UCEDD and PIE lead, the administering entity for the Employment First Council. The Employment First Council includes KentuckyWorks' organizations, people with I/DD, families, and employers. The first Employment First Council will meet in October 2018.

The Employment First Council aims to:

- Identify state policies that create disincentives to employment for people with I/DD and develop recommendations to eliminate the disincentives
- Develop trainings and resources for families, self-advocates, public and private providers, and employers on the benefits of employment
- Recommend the implementation of effective practices to increase employment opportunities for workers with I/DD
- Establish measureable goals to assess progress
- Provide an annual report to the governor

Leveraging Grants or Initiatives

Think College Grant

During the September 2017 to February 2018 reporting period, KentuckyWorks received a nine-month capacity building grant from Think College and began planning a Secondary Education Community Conversation. The grant expanded the work of the collaborative partners by adding a Post-Secondary Work Team to the KentuckyWorks consortium. The funding is intended to promote greater knowledge of students, families, K-12 education systems, and institutions of higher education about quality higher education programs as a tool to improve outcomes for students with I/DD.

Through the grant, KentuckyWorks hosted a statewide Post-Secondary Education Community Conversation on May 21, 2018. This Community Conversation was held in collaboration with Think College and Erik Carter of Vanderbilt University and focused on expanding post-secondary education options for students with I/DD in Kentucky. Three Community Conversations were held, with one at each site: Murray State University in western Kentucky, Bluegrass Community and Technical College in central Kentucky, and Morehead State University in eastern Kentucky. About 100 individuals attended across three locations and a report on the strategies generated across each site was created. The KentuckyWorks Post-Secondary Education Work Team then prioritized all of the strategies to create an action plan. The action plan includes creating an informational brochure for students and families on post-secondary options and funding sources for financing post-secondary education. These resources will be shared with Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) providers who work with transition-age youth. The brochures are located on the [KentuckyWorks website](#).

National Training Center Initiative Grant

During the March 2018 to August 2018 reporting period, KentuckyWorks staff submitted and received a National Training Center (NTC) Initiative grant to build workforce capacity to better serve individuals with co-occurring I/DD and mental illness. The project objectives include establishing a nationally represented Advisory Panel of experts and developing an innovative recruitment, marketing, and information dissemination plan. Expected outcomes include an enhanced collaborative capacity to address the needs of individuals with I/DD and increased access to resources related to services and supports.

Program Development

Increased Program Capacity

Train the Trainer Event

On July 17, 2018, KentuckyWorks held a train the trainer event on implementing the family engagement curriculum for about 30 people from key Kentucky agencies involved in transition services for youth with I/DD. Attendees included representatives from parent and disability advocacy organizations, and KY Special Parent Involvement Network (SPIN), which is Kentucky's parent training and information network. KentuckyWorks is currently assisting the trainers with setting up their own training sessions for families.

Relationship Building

Collaboration Progress, Highlights, or Achievements

KentuckyWorks Consortium

KentuckyWorks' consortium was established during the October 2016 to March 2017 reporting period. It is comprised of professionals representing state agencies, self-advocates, and family members. The consortium also has a Policy Work Team and a Family/Advocacy Work Team. Between April and August 2017, KentuckyWorks added a Marketing Work Team. Between September 2017 and February 2018, KentuckyWorks added a Post-Secondary Work Team. Between April 2017 and August 2018, Kentucky held six consortium meetings with two meetings per reporting period.

During the March to August 2018 reporting period, KentuckyWorks added two new agencies to the consortium. The Kentucky Community and Technical College System was recruited through consortium relationships. The Kentucky Department of Aging and Independent Living (DAIL) was recruited because the Vocational Rehabilitation director is now employed with DAIL. A few non-active members have been removed but all of the original agencies are still represented. As of August 2018, there were 48 members.

Stakeholder, Parent and Family, and Employer Engagement

Statewide Transition Summit

KentuckyWorks held the Statewide Transition Summit in February 2017. The Summit included a youth panel that addressed the audience of 120 participants. Participants included educators, state representatives, agency providers, family members, community organizations, and individuals with I/DD. Experts spoke at the Summit and attendees discussed strategies for increasing meaningful employment opportunities for youth and young adults with I/DD. Attendees discussed stakeholder awareness, parent and family engagement, and employer engagement. Participants completed a post-meeting survey to rate their experience at the Summit.

In April 2017, KentuckyWorks consortium agencies reviewed Statewide Transition Summit findings and administered a follow-up survey. As demonstrated by the survey results, consortium members felt positive about the collaborative nature of the group and had a clear vision of the group's goals. In June 2017, KentuckyWorks consortium agencies met, discussed project goals, and created a Year Two action plan.

Community Conversations

Starting in 2018, KentuckyWorks planned to hold four Community Conversations per year to address the challenge of holding Communities of Practice across all Regional Education Cooperatives. KentuckyWorks originally planned to hold Communities of Practice across all Regional Education Cooperatives but realized that KentuckyWorks will not have a local approach.

However, a challenge is that the Regional Educational Cooperatives in Kentucky are large and geographically separated. For example, the nine Educational Cooperatives extend up to 44 school districts each and include up to 34 counties. Because they are holding Community Conversations instead of Regional Educational Cooperatives Community Conversations, KentuckyWorks decided to create implementation teams after each Community Conversation to implement suggested ideas.

Morehead Community Conversation and Implementation Team

KentuckyWorks held the first local Community Conversation in February 2017, in the Morehead, Kentucky area. Participants included community organizations, state representatives, educators, civic leaders, and agency providers. In round table discussions, participants shared ideas on how to address employment-related issues and how to consider bringing those ideas into action. Attendees discussed stakeholder awareness, parent and family engagement, and employer engagement.

After the Morehead Community Conversation, KentuckyWorks created an implementation team to implement suggested ideas from the meeting. The Morehead Implementation Team focused on two model programs. The first program is a job experience program that is similar to Project SEARCH™. The program planned to create a series of paid job experiences for students with I/DD to rotate jobs throughout the school year. The second program focuses on employers and creates a disability-friendly business recognition credential. The criteria for the business recognition credential currently includes: 1) conducting an accessibility survey that rates the extent to which their physical business is accessible; 2) making a commitment to hiring individuals with I/DD, including allowing a KentuckyWorks affiliated employment agency to conduct a survey of operations to identify tasks that can be customized; 3) recognizing people with I/DD and their families as an important part of their marketing plan; and 4) requiring all staff to receive KentuckyWorks provided training on integrating people with I/DD into the workplace and customer base.

During the September 2017 to February 2018 reporting period, the Morehead Implementation Team worked on creating the employer recognition model demonstration program, called the Inclusive Community Project. KentuckyWorks staff and the Morehead Implementation Team shared the work plan and progress with volunteers in February 2018, which was enthusiastically accepted. To create the program, the Morehead Implementation Team obtained and modified an accessibility survey based on the 2010 Americans with Disabilities Act Standards for Accessible Design. The survey is ready for businesses to use and will be posted on the Inclusive Community Project's website in the future. Many agencies in the area indicated a desire to participate in a survey of operations to identify customizable tasks.

KentuckyWorks staff designed and piloted a training for staff within organizations to help them welcome and interact with coworkers and customers with I/DD. The Morehead Implementation Team's next step is to develop an online, Customized Employment refresher course for employment specialists. KentuckyWorks staff also sent out a survey two to three months after the Morehead Community Conversation for participants to note specific action steps that they had seen accomplished thus far.

Bluegrass Community Conversation Implementation Team

In September 2017, KentuckyWorks held the Bluegrass Community Conversation with 55 participants, and 42 participants completed the post-event survey. Results indicated that participants thought the event was a valuable time investment and contributed to increased employment opportunities. Attendees also reported improved views of the capacity of the community and were able to identify future steps to enhance employment outcomes for students and others with I/DD.

KentuckyWorks staff also created several infographics highlighting the benefits of hiring individuals with I/DD and dispelling myths about hiring individuals with I/DD. The infographics were titled Hiring People with Disabilities Makes Sense for Business; What Employers are Saying About Hiring People with Disabilities, Tax Incentives for Employers, and Myths About Workers with Disabilities. KentuckyWorks staff shared the infographics on social media.

KentuckyWorks staff sent out a survey three months after the Bluegrass Community Conversation for participants to note specific action steps that they had seen accomplished thus far.

Autism Statewide Community Conversation

In October 2017, KentuckyWorks held the Autism Statewide Community Conversation for families, self-advocates, professionals, and policy makers serving transition age youth with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Eighty individuals attended the Community Conversation and 60 people completed the post-event surveys. Results indicated that participants thought the Community Conversation improved their views of the community in enhancing employment opportunities and that the Community Conversation will contribute to increased employment opportunities for students and others with I/DD. The focus of this Community Conversation was on awareness of resources and issues, and statewide strategies that participants could pursue.

Family Engagement Work Team and Community Conversation

During the September 2017 to February 2018 reporting period, KentuckyWorks staff formed a Family Engagement Work Team. This Work Team developed a training presentation about employment for families to be shared at upcoming meetings with parent advocacy groups. When people were unable to attend meetings, KentuckyWorks staff engaged in individual phone conversations, individual in-person meetings, and email solicitations for guidance.

In July 2018, the Work Team hosted a Family and Youth Community Conversation, which was attended by about 35 people, including a representative from the governor's office. During the Community Conversation, attendees discussed how to empower youth with disabilities to envision CIE in their future and how to reach all families to raise their expectations. A full report on the Community Conversation is located on the [KentuckyWorks website](#).

KentuckyWorks also created a family engagement curriculum in collaboration with the technical assistance consultant from the YES! Center. The curriculum encourages families to consider a vision of employment for their child from an early age, to bring that vision to their Individualized Education Programs (IEP) meetings, and to plan collaboratively with the IEP team.

Data Systems and Employment Tools

Shared Data Systems

Kentucky Post-School Outcomes Center

Through the Kentucky Post-School Outcomes Center (KyPSO), KentuckyWorks project partners are aiming to gain insight into how students who exited school with IEPs transition into post-school life. Information from this project helps determine whether students chose to further their education or enter the workforce and helps determine levels of community engagement, former student assistance, and support needs. The outcomes are collected for each youth exiting high school with an IEP through the Youth One Year Out Survey. KyPSO now has over 600 interviewers trained to conduct post-school outcome interviews. Additional interviewers will be trained in the Spring of 2019. Through KyPSO, KentuckyWorks partner agencies conducted 2,534 Youth One Year Out interviews out of 4,549 former students who were eligible to be interviewed in 2017, which yielded a 56 percent response rate.

Respondents were generally representative of the eligible population in terms of race, gender, and disability type. Dropouts were underrepresented. Interviews of students who exited high school during the 2015-2016 school year revealed that 50 percent of all youth who exited high school with IEPs were competitively employed a year after exit. The employment outcomes showed that approximately 13 percent of former students with significant I/DD were competitively employed and 11 percent were enrolled in higher education.

Professional Development Modules

KentuckyWorks staff have developed three training modules for professional development across partner agencies. There is a fourth module in development as of August 2018. The three modules include:

- *Module 1—Transition 101: What We All Need to Know About Transition for Students with Significant Disabilities.* This module provides an overview of the current status of employment outcomes for youth with I/DD in Kentucky, the key steps in the transition process itself, the legal requirements and the roles of each agency, types of employment (i.e., competitive, supported, customized), and the development of measurable post-secondary goals. Module 1 was completed during the April to August 2017 reporting period.
- *Module 2—Transition 102: Important Predictors for Post-School Success.* This module includes an in-depth discussion of the key predictors/practices for CIE for youth with I/DD, with specific examples and Kentucky resources for schools interested in implementing those practices. Module 2 was completed during the September 2017 to February 2018 reporting period.
- *Module 3—Benefits 101.* This module covers the impact of wages on benefits (a key concern especially for families) with specific exercises designed to help users identify the impact of wages for their own situation/student. Module 3 was completed during the September 2017 to February 2018 reporting period.

KentuckyWorks staff applied for professional development credits for Module 1 and created a multiple choice post-test to test knowledge. During the April to August 2017 reporting period, KentuckyWorks staff pilot tested Module 1 with students in a Masters of Rehabilitation Counseling program at the University of Kentucky.

Each partner agency sent out notices to constituents on the availability of the modules. KentuckyWorks received buy-in for promoting the modules from KDE, OVR, and the KY Division for Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities.

All modules include guiding and interactive questions, a post-test, and a Certificate of Completion. At the end of August 2018, 101 individuals completed Transition 101 Module; 67 individuals completed Transition 102 Module 2; and 119 individuals completed Benefits Module 101. KentuckyWorks also made the modules available in a view only mode, which has enabled families and self-advocates to obtain the information without having to register for the continuing education.

Data Sharing Agreement

During the March to August 2018 reporting period, KentuckyWorks facilitated the development of the data sharing agreement between KDE and OVR that allows OVR to access student progress records for students with I/DD who receive OVR-funded Pre-ETS services as part of their education program. The agreement also allows OVR to better evaluate the impact of these services as it attempts to improve transition outcomes for students with I/DD. The final agreement is awaiting signatures.

Documenting and Disseminating Resources

KentuckyWorks Website

KentuckyWorks launched the KentuckyWorks website during the April to August 2017 reporting period. The KentuckyWorks website includes contact information, videos on individuals with I/DD that are employed, and training modules. The KentuckyWorks website also includes a Resource Survey that asks users, “Are you a youth with a disability, an employer, a family member, an educator, or other employment professional?” Based on their selection, the user is asked other questions that will lead them to the most appropriate and helpful resources. The website can be accessed at <https://www.kentuckyworks.org>.

During the September 2017 to February 2018 reporting period, KentuckyWorks staff pursued increased social media engagement by creating original content for their blog. KentuckyWorks staff wrote a blog on the KentuckyWorks website that highlights the family of a youth transitioning from school to employment. There is also a forum for comments.

During the March to August 2018 reporting period, KentuckyWorks created a bi-monthly newsletter. KentuckyWorks also continued to update its parent blog. All resources are shared with the KentuckyWorks consortium, work teams, and the HDI email lists.

Sustainability Efforts

Sustainability Beyond the PIE Grant

Employment First Efforts

To increase sustainability, KentuckyWorks staff pursued an Employment First Executive Order. As of August 2018, HDI is leading the Employment First Council and will promote KentuckyWorks initiatives through the Council.

Considerations

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