

Quarterly KITC Meeting Minutes – April 24, 2026

Attendees

Abbigail Morris (Murray State), Beth McDaniel (OVR), Beth Metzger (P&A), Carrie Stith-Webster (OVEC), Chelsea Bocard (KYPSO), Deborah Taub (KYPSO), Dorothy Jenkins (OVR), Ellen Hoffman (DJJ), Hendrix Brakefield (LifeWorks), Jenny Hogg (KEDC), Janice Johnston (BHDID), Jonathan White (OVR), Kellie Smith (KY-SPIN), Marisa Duarte (KDE), Sherri Craig (KDE), Stacie Hutchison (GRREC), Stacy Henderson (HDI), Teresa Belluscio (HDI), Tony LoBianco (KYPSO), Will Kayatin (KVEC), Zach Stumbo (KDE)

Welcome and Introductions

Participants introduced themselves and briefly shared personal “bright spots” to open the meeting.

Presentations

LifeWorks for Autism – Hendrix Brakefield

[LifeWorks Presentation Recording](#)

- [LifeWorks](#) is a 501(c)(3) organization founded in 2020.
- Focus is on employment and independent living for autistic and neurodivergent adults.
- National unemployment rate for autistic adults is cited at approximately 85%.
- Programs include [Transition Academy](#) (Bowling Green), [Bridge Academy](#), and On The Go.

Transition Academy

- The Transition Academy is a two-year, full-time program emphasizing employment, independent living skills, and community engagement.
- Participants live in on-site apartments and follow a structured 40-hour weekly schedule.
- LifeWorks reports that 90% of graduates have maintained employment after the Transition Academy.

Bridge Academy

- A community college support program currently operating at 8 colleges statewide.
- Provides coaching, study hall support, independent living curriculum, and connection to campus resources.
- Designed to complement (not replace) existing Kentucky Community & Technical College System (KCTCS) supports.

On the Go

- A part-time option version of the Transition Academy, offering greater flexibility.

CTP and Summer Leadership Experience Camp – Teresa Bellulscio

[CTP and SLE Camp Presentation Recording](#)

Comprehensive Transition and Postsecondary (CTP) Program

- There are 6 CTP programs in Kentucky. At the University of Kentucky (UK), it's the [College and Career Studies Program](#) (CCS).
- The [CCS fall 2026 application](#) is open through April 30th. CCS is for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
- Small cohort (approximately 5 students per year).
- CTPs are inclusive, and students take regular college courses for credit, audit, or pass/fail. Students are eligible to receive financial aid.

Summer Leadership Experience Camp (SLE)

- The SLE Camp will take place July 12th – 16th and virtual options are available.
- Deadline for applying is April 30th. [SLE Camp Application](#)
- The camp is for upper-class high school students with disabilities (under age 22).
- Funded by the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR).
- Students learn self-advocacy skills, determination, and self-disclosure. There are several informational sessions, activities, and speakers.
- Students stay at the UK residence hall.

KY-SPIN – Kellie Smith

[Presentation Recording](#)

About KY-SPIN

- KY-SPIN serves as the state's Parent Training and Information Center (PTI).
- Provides training, resources, and peer support to families of individuals with disabilities (birth–26). Federally required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
- Also serves as the PACER Center's Project Launch Center for Kentucky, funded by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) to develop and disseminate information and resources to youth and young adults who are transition-age.
- We don't represent families in meetings or provide legal/financial advice.
- We do help families and professionals access meaningful programs/assistance. Our area of expertise is education.
- We make a lot of referrals to experts: CTPs, OVR, LifeWorks, and the Human Development Institute (HDI), etc. We are a connection hub.

- We work closely with the Kentucky Early Intervention System (KEIS), IEP/504 work, and train parents on how to become meaningful partners in their child’s education.
- We offer a wealth of resources, worksheets, handouts, and training. We offer monthly Transition Tuesday training sessions for educators.

What’s New

- Launched a learning center. Right now, it only houses one course: [Transition 360 For Parents](#) in conjunction with KDE’s transition work. Helps families understand post-secondary education practices for students with disabilities.
- We’re having training in the fall for educators. It will focus on the hard conversations educators must have with families when they begin the referral process.

Agency Updates

Supported Employment Training Project (SETP) – Chelsea Bocard

Autism Informed Employer Quick Video Series

- The [Autism Informed Employer Quick Video Series](#) is a collaboration between the Kentucky Employment First Council and Innovative Supports for Autistic Workers (ISAW). This could be a helpful tool to share with teachers, students, and employers.
- [Email SETP](#) if you’d like to be added to the monthly email list.
- Currently, there are four 2-minute videos:
 1. Why Hire Autistic Workers
 2. What to Expect in the Interview
 3. Interview Tips
 4. Sensory Needs of Autistic Workers

Webinars

- The SETP hosts [Kentucky Disability Benefits 101 5th Thursday Coffee/Tea Break](#) webinars and discusses [Kentucky Disability Benefits 101](#). These will take place on April 30th, July 30th, and October 29th from 3:15-3:45 pm ET. Carolyn Wheeler will facilitate these and discuss how a person can maintain their eligibility for Medicaid or Medicare while working. We encourage job seekers and their families, Employment Specialists, and OVR staff to attend.
- SETP hosted several short monthly webinars from January to April 8th geared towards students, called How a Paycheck Can Work with a Government Check. Carolyn Wheeler has facilitated these as well, and they have been well attended (153 people in total; 77 were high school students).

ABLEtoSave Month

- April is [ABLEtoSave Month](#) (Achieving a Better Life Experience). ABLEtoSave is a month-long campaign providing information about ABLE accounts. They're offering webinars, toolkits, and other resources. [STABLE Kentucky](#) is Kentucky's ABLE program. Kentucky residents can open a tax-advantaged account and save for disability-related expenses without losing benefits like SSI or Medicaid.

Infographics to Share

- SETP has created several updated infographics that we encourage you to share:
 - [Student Earned Income Exclusion Infographic](#)
 - [The Truth About Working While Receiving SSI in 2026](#)
 - [Kentucky STABLE Accounts Infographic](#)
 - [STABLE Infographic \(Accessible\)](#)

SETP Book Club

- [SETP has a Book Club](#), and the goal is to bring people together to better understand disability and to think about and represent people in the workplace. Upcoming Book Club starts in May and meets weekly (we'll read one chapter per week). We're reading *Sitting Pretty* by Rebekah Taussig.

Kentucky Post School Outcomes Center (KYPSO) – Tony LoBianco

YOYO Update

- The Youth One Year Out (YOYO) survey opened April 1st. Approximately 400 responses received so far (7% response rate). Some smaller districts have already met their targets.
- New disclosure and accommodation items added this year, informed by KITC. We've received feedback from districts that many students are unaware they have a disability.

YOYO Interviewer Best Practices

- New [YOYO Interviewer Best Practices](#) document shared. This will also be the focus of the next Special Education Regional Technical Assistance Center (SERTAC) data dive. SERTAC members are encouraged to reach out to their districts and share this guide to support consistent data collection.

Student Transition Experiences Needed

- Looking for additional students willing to share transition experiences at an upcoming meeting (positive, negative, or mixed). Please share the [student panel flyer](#).

TASH Conference

- Proposals are open for the [TASH conference](#), December 3rd-5th in Philadelphia. There will be webinars on transition.

Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) - Beth McDaniel

Branch Manager for Transition Services Branch

- Beth McDaniel was recognized as the new Branch Manager for the Transition Services Branch at OVR following Veronica's retirement in February.
- Veronica's contributions and institutional knowledge were acknowledged, and her retirement was noted as a significant transition for the branch.

Work-Based Learning Experiences

- OVR plans to offer summer work-based learning experiences again this year for students with disabilities and providers. Additional information will be shared soon.

CWTP Administrator Role

- In the interim, Beth is also assuming responsibilities for the CWTP Administrator role until that position is filled. The position has recently been posted, and recruitment is underway.

KDE/Office of Career and Technical Education (CTE) – Sherri Craig

Middle School Career Exploration Initiative

- The Middle School Career Exploration Initiative is underway through collaborative efforts involving the Office of Career and Technical Education, Council on Postsecondary Education, and school counselors and educators statewide.
- As part of this initiative, current middle school career exploration activities and infrastructure were analyzed, and Kentucky participated in a multi-state workgroup funded by the American Student Assistance and Education Strategic Group.
- Participating middle schools will collaborate to co-create, design, and pilot a high-quality career exploration plan during the 2026–2027 school year.
- **The Middle School Career Exploration Impact Research Study** is being conducted in partnership with the Office of Assessment and Accountability, a third-party research organization. The study will examine how middle school career exploration impacts high school CTE participation and postsecondary readiness outcomes.
- Findings are expected to be available in the 2026–2027 school year.

Work-Based Learning Coordinator

- Offered to coordinate a future presentation from the Work-Based Learning Coordinator to share information relevant to partner agencies.

- Highlighted an additional career readiness indicator available to students - successful completion of a Kentucky Board of Education-approved cooperative or internship.
- The experience must align with a credential or associate degree.
- Requires a minimum of 300 hours of on-the-job work experience.

Human Development Institute (HDI) Community Work Transition Program (CWTP) – Stacy Henderson

In the Works

- CWTP staff are currently focused on end-of-year data collection and reporting, including submitting required data to KYPSO and OVR partners.
- Busy with monitoring our programs, competitive integrated employment outcomes, and continuity of services for students, even during Order of Selection.
- We still have students that are in transition and we're also servicing pre-employment transition services by getting out in the community and doing work-based learning experiences. A key goal is to prevent service gaps, particularly for students exiting school and preparing for employment.

Reflections from KY-SPIN Presentation

- Stacy shared reflections from KY-SPIN's presentation, noting ongoing challenges with parent denial or uncertainty about students' potential for employment, and limited time to deliver needed supports before students exit school.
- Stacy plans to coordinate with KY-SPIN to provide a "deep dive" for Employment Specialists.

Green River Regional Educational Cooperative (GRREC) – Stacie Hutchison

RITT

- The final Regional Interagency Transition Team (RITT) meeting for the 2025–2026 school year was held earlier this week.
- The meeting featured a guest speaker from Western Kentucky University Circle of Support, who presented on mental health and transition.
- A panel of autistic college students shared their transition experiences, including what worked and what did not. The discussion emphasized youth autonomy and decision-making as research-based practices that support meaningful transition outcomes.

GRREC Summer Book Club

- GRREC will host a summer book study for educators and community partners focused on meaningful transition experiences.
- Partnering with a due process consultant to marry IEP compliance pieces with best practices, tools, resources, and considerations to build robust transition supports and experiences.

Upcoming Presentations/Conferences

- Stacie will co-present with a district Deaf/Hard of Hearing provider at a state conference this summer on person-centered planning practices and transition supports.
- Presenting on Charting the LifeCourse and person-centered planning practices with Aetna on August 26th.
- A proposal has been submitted to present at the [Division on Career Development and Transition \(DCDT\) conference](#) in New Orleans in October. Stacie also plans to sit for the National Certification in Transition Services at that conference.

KDE/Office of Continuous Improvement and Support - Zach Stumbo

Subgrant Monitoring

- KDE has completed monitoring for slightly more than half of competitive subgrant locations during Year 2 of the 3-year grant cycle.

Homeless Liaison Training

- Hosting statewide training for Kentucky homeless liaisons. Approximately 174 liaisons statewide will be invited.
- The training will take place on October 26th in Lexington at the Central Bank Center.
- [Email Zach](#) if your agency is interested in presenting during a breakout session.

Program Analysis Update

- KDE is partnering with UK-HDI to update a program analysis. This year's analysis will expand beyond school report card data to include special education eligibility categories related to homelessness and participation in Career and Technical Education (CTE).

District Mini Grants

- KDE plans to release a series of mini-grants for approximately six districts. Target districts will have high need and no access to competitive grant dollars.
- Funding decisions will be guided by district-submitted needs assessments. Estimated funding is approximately \$27,500 across six locations.

- Will help support district liaisons' attendance at the National Homeless Education Conference in Nashville from October 31st to November 3rd.
- Remaining funds may be used for small district-level projects related to homeless education supports.

Kentucky Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental, and Intellectual Disabilities (DBHDID) – Janice Johnston

Transition-Age Youth Coordinators

- The Division of Mental Health contracts with Community Mental Health Centers (CMHCs) across the state.
- Each CMHC has Transition-Age Youth Coordinators who support youth ages 14 –26 and serve as connectors to services and resources within the community and CMHCs.

Youth Initiative Results

- Through two SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) grants, the division funded initiatives to improve access to services for youth ages 16–25.
- These were two five-year grants that concluded at the end of 2024.
- Youth voice was intentionally incorporated into program design.
- Youth identified the need for easy, youth-friendly access to services, specifically: spaces where youth could drop in without navigating waiting rooms or formal intake processes.
- As a result, several drop-in centers were established across the state.
- The state name for these centers is Transition Age Youth Launching Realized Dreams ([TAYLRD](#)), though local sites may use community-specific names.
- There are currently 12 centers operating in 12 counties statewide.
- An additional program, [iHOPE](#), supports youth who are at risk of or experiencing a first episode of psychosis.
- This program operates in conjunction with community mental health centers.

Mental Health Awareness Month

- [Mental Health Awareness Month](#) will take place in May.
- The [Kentucky Partnership for Families and Children \(KPFC\)](#) will host an event on May 7th focused on children's mental health awareness.

Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) – Ellen Hoffman

Transition Summit

- The annual DJJ Transition Summit will be July 27th at the Clarion Inn on Newtown Pike, Lexington. This year, we're including more facility managers and people who run detention centers to strengthen understanding of students' disability-related needs and IEP requirements that extend into residential facilities.

IDEA Monitoring Update

- Four DJJ facilities underwent IDEA monitoring visits by KDE this year. All visits were successful.

KDE/Office of Special Education and Early Learning (OSEEL) – Marisa Duarte

Kentucky Autism Training Center (KATC) Caregiver Summit

- KDE participated in the Kentucky Autism Training Center (KATC) Caregiver Summit, held in Bowling Green at the Carol Nicely Center earlier this year.
- The event included over 40 families and caregivers.
- Participants engaged in interactive roundtables and specialized workshops.
- Families received direct access to tools and resources focused on navigating postsecondary transition.
- Additional family-centered resources were shared from partner organizations, including Regional Training Centers (RTCs), KY-SPIN, and the Kentucky Office of Autism.
- Several school districts were represented at the summit. Two special education directors attended and supported families.
- Additional [KATC Caregiver Summit](#) opportunities are available on May 8th – 9th in Florence, Kentucky, and September 11th – 12th in Richmond, Kentucky. Events include meals and lodging. Cost is \$25 per person or \$40 per couple.

Youth Advocacy Outreach Summit

- Shared information about the upcoming Youth Advocacy Outreach Summit, hosted by the [Kentucky Statewide Independent Living Council \(KY SILC\)](#), which is the [Youth Advisory Council \(YAC\)](#).
- The [Youth Advocacy Summit](#) will be held June 11th – 12th at the Campbell House, Lexington. Open to emerging leaders ages 14–24.
- The summit will include speakers, informative breakout sessions, and opportunities for youth, families, and trusted adults to connect around independent living and advocacy. Parents and trusted adults are encouraged to attend.

Kentucky Educational Development Corporation (KEDC) – Jenny Hogg

Ongoing

- KEDC continues to support transition-related professional learning for teachers through its transition cadre.
- The Youth Advisory Council (YAC) recently presented at a March meeting to share youth advocacy opportunities that teachers can take back to students.
- KEDC continues partnerships to expand transition experiences, including work with CareerView XR to provide virtual-reality-based career exploration opportunities.

Reverse Career Fairs

- KEDC recently completed four Reverse Career Fair events.
- Reverse Career Fairs invert the traditional model by placing students in the lead, with employers rotating between student-run stations.
- Hosted in partnership with community and technical colleges to support accessibility across a large geographic area. 88 students from 14 districts participated.
- We had 83 employers, resulting in nearly a one-to-one student-to-employer ratio.
- Students gain practice in interview skills and opportunities for internships, volunteering, and paid employment. Several students received job offers during the events.

Ohio Valley Educational Cooperative (OVEC) – Carrie Stith-Webster

Transition Conference

- Partnered with GLEC to host a student-focused transition conference.
- The conference served overlapping regional boundaries and was reported as successful.
- While transportation challenges limited participation, feedback from students and teachers was very positive.

Carl D. Perkins Center

- Carrie recently accompanied three students from Grant County High School on a visit to the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Center.
- The visit included a nearly three-hour, in-depth tour of the programs and facilities.
- Carrie highlighted expanded programming and flexibility at Carl Perkins, noting that students can pursue interests not offered as a standalone program through work-based, customized options. For example, a student interested in floral design was able to participate by enrolling in a related program and received on-the-job training with a local business aligned with that interest.

- Let's ensure that school districts, students, and families are aware of opportunities available at Carl Perkins.
- OVEC is exploring options to make annual student visits to Carl Perkins a regular opportunity, given the breadth of pathways available.

Kentucky Protection & Advocacy (P&A) – Beth Metzger

What's New

- P&A's Children and Youth Team has developed a new transition-focused training for youth who are preparing to exit Department for Community Based Services (DCBS) or Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) custody.
- Traveling to Bowling Green on May 4th to provide employment rights training at Path Forward. The training will support participants in the [Knowledge Equips You \(KEY\) Academy](#).
- Has observed an increase in young people reaching out for assistance through her work with the Client Assistance Program and Social Security Beneficiaries programs.

Ready to Work Program

- Recently learned about the Ready to Work Program, a collaborative initiative between DCBS and the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS). The Ready to Work Program supports young parents who are Kentucky Transitional Assistance Program (TANF) recipients and college students, and referrals through DCBS workers. Employment opportunities of up to 30 hours per week.
- Beth anticipates future opportunities to present to Ready to Work coordinators statewide and explore potential collaborations. There are approximately 30 coordinators statewide.

KY-SPIN – Kellie Smith

Resources

- Shared the "[Guide for Difficult Conversations](#)" resource for youth.
- The guide focuses on simple, developmentally appropriate ways to talk with young people.

Training Opportunities

- The "[From Misunderstanding to Support](#)" [Lunch & Learn](#) on May 12th will explore how invisible disabilities, including mental health needs, impact students' education and how these needs often present as classroom behaviors.

- The [“Taking Charge of Your Mental Health” Transition Tuesday session](#) on May 26th will be led by a psychologist who will train youth on how to recognize when they’re in a mental health crisis and how to get help.
- KY-SPIN is presenting practical life skills as part of Aetna’s Intellectual and Developmental Disability Education Empowerment Series. Topics span from hygiene to career readiness.
- [Children’s Behavioral Health Day](#) on May 7th in Frankfort, hosted by the Kentucky Partnership for Families and Children (KPFC).