KENTUCKY'S WORK MATTERS

TASK FORCE REPORT

Addressing Barriers to Employment Among Five Key Populations

WITH SUPPORT FROM THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS

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The National Task Force on Workforce Development for People with Disabilities was convened in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy's State Exchange on Employment and Disability in its efforts to foster a nationwide workforce more inclusive of people with disabilities.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

FORWARD..... 4

LAYING THE GROUNDWORK..... 6

PREPARING FOR WORK..... 9

GETTING TO WORK AND
ASSESSING WORK OPPORTUNITIES..... 10

JOB RETENTION AND RETURN TO WORK..... 12

SUPPORTING SELF-EMPLOYMENT
AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP..... 13

VETERANS AND SERVICE DISABLED VETERANS..... 14

FOSTER YOUTH..... 17

INDIVIDUALS WITH CRIMINAL RECORDS..... 20

INDIVIDUALS WITH SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS..... 23

CONCLUSIONS..... 25

"THERE IS DIGNITY IN WORK. KENTUCKY'S ECONOMY WILL BE STRONGEST BY UTILIZING THE TALENTS OF EVERY KENTUCKIAN IN ORDER TO REALIZE OUR VISION FOR GROWTH."

– GOVERNOR MATT BEVIN

FORWARD

Work matters. The opportunity to contribute one's creativity and productivity to their community through meaningful work can be a foundational element to improved quality of life. Though this truth may seem self-evident, or is perhaps taken for granted by many of us, engaging in meaningful work is a goal that goes unfulfilled for far too many Kentuckians. Among certain populations within the Commonwealth, barriers to employment exist that either prevent or hinder individuals within these populations from fulfilling their goal to work.

The U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy, via their State Exchange on Employment and Disability (SEED), previously formed a collaborative of leading state intermediary organizations, including The Council of State Governments (CSG), the National Conference of State Legislators (NCSL) and the National Governors Association (NGA) to convene a National Task Force on Workforce Development for people with disabilities. Their subsequent Work Matters report focused on policy recommendations to improve work opportunities for the disabled population. The Commonwealth of Kentucky elected to draw upon that work and expanded the scope to include additional populations that remain an untapped resource in the workforce.

The Kentucky Work Matters Task Force brought together every department of Kentucky state government that has a hand in workforce development with members of the private sector. The mission of the Task Force was to identify obstacles to employment for five populations and propose policy solutions to remove those barriers. This Task Force believes that many of the strategies developed to enhance hiring for those with disabilities are applicable to and beneficial for additional populations.

THE FIVE POPULATIONS THIS REPORT WILL ADDRESS INCLUDE:

- People with disabilities
- Veterans (with an emphasis on service-disabled veterans)
- Foster Youth
- Individuals with criminal records
- Individuals with substance use disorders

In addition to barriers unique to each population, the Task Force identified individuals who may fall in to more than one group. For example, between 4 and 10 percent of those incarcerated have an intellectual disability, compared to only 2 to 3 percent of the general population.

Likewise, as of June 2017, 4.7 percent* of the incarcerated population of Kentucky was comprised of veterans, a majority of whom (56 percent) were honorably discharged. Finally, according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, between 20 and 30 percent of individuals incarcerated in federal and state prisons and local jails have one or more disabilities.

WHILE INDIVIDUALS IN THESE "CROSSOVER" POPULATIONS MAY FACE UNIQUELY CHALLENGING OBSTACLES TO OBTAINING WORK, POLICY SOLUTIONS OUTLINED IN THIS REPORT TO BENEFIT THESE POPULATIONS SHOULD BE THE FIRST PRIORITY OF POLICY MAKERS. WHEN THOSE RECOMMENDATIONS ARE ENACTED, ALL FIVE POPULATIONS BENEFIT. SEVERAL SUCH POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS THAT MAY BE CHARACTERIZED AS "LOW HANGING FRUIT" ARE IDENTIFIED IN THE CONCLUSION OF THIS REPORT.

Current statistics show Kentucky's labor participation rate is 54.7 percent, well below the national average of 62.9 percent. In addition, 15.7 percent of the Commonwealth's population is classified as "disabled," compared to only 10.4 percent nationally. Governor Bevin issued an executive order to form this Task Force because he strongly believes that citizens with disabilities and Kentuckians facing other obstacles to employment have valuable and unique contributions to lend to our society and our labor force, yet, in many cases, are underutilized.

Employment benefits the individuals in these populations by empowering them to achieve independence, economic self-sufficiency, and a greater sense of dignity and self-worth. At the same time, by facilitating employment opportunities for these individuals, the state will undertake a direct and cost-effective method of improving outcomes for them. Removing barriers to employment benefits the Kentucky economy by adding individuals to the labor force who in many cases are uniquely motivated, creative and dedicated. In so doing, Kentucky leverages a valuable labor resource that helps the Commonwealth achieve its economic growth goals.

Kentucky has the opportunity to remove these barriers and communicate that the state is committed to securing and expanding employment access for all workers, especially workers in the five target populations. By implementing the appropriate policies, Kentucky can set an example by becoming a model employer of people in these five populations. At the same time, the Commonwealth can effectively demonstrate inclusion of people with disabilities, veterans (with emphasis on service- disabled veterans), individuals with criminal records, foster youth and those with substance use disorders as viable employees. To support public and private-sector employment efforts, Kentucky must be prepared to competently and efficiently meet the needs of workers within these five populations and coordinate efforts that cross multiple government sectors. These workers represent a valuable untapped labor resource, provided their needs as workers are met.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS ON WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

FIVE CATEGORIES OF RECOMMENDATIONS ARE INCLUDED IN THIS REPORT:

- **LAYING THE GROUNDWORK**
- **PREPARING FOR WORK**
- **GETTING TO WORK /ACCESSING WORK**
- **STAYING AT WORK**
- **SUPPORTING SELF EMPLOYMENT**

*UNLESS OTHERWISE DESIGNATED, STATISTICS IN THIS REPORT ARE FROM THE INCLUDED INFOGRAPHICS PROVIDED BY THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS.

LAYING THE GROUNDWORK

LAYING THE GROUNDWORK

KENTUCKY AS A MODEL EMPLOYER

Kentucky can become a model employer of individuals with disabilities by developing and adopting inclusive policies and serve as an example to private sector employers of the potential success of these practices. When successful employment efforts are implemented, individuals are no longer as dependent on cash, or medical and disability benefits. As a result, Kentucky can grow the taxpayer base while simultaneously lowering costs to the state for these benefits and their administration.

POLICY OPTIONS

a. Use existing infrastructure to adopt and implement policies, practices, and procedures favorable to these populations (i.e., the KentuckyWorks program and website).

b. Adopt an overall strategic plan for Kentucky and for each state agency, including hiring goals, surveys, and progress reports.

c. Adopt fast track hiring systems (e.g. special appointment lists, waiving/modifying civil service exams, trial work periods and onsite accommodations).

d. Enter into formal partnerships with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Office for the Blind to create paths to certifications for individuals with disabilities.

e. Adopt centralized accommodation funds and centralized expertise on disability employment.

f. As these populations become employees, incorporate them into the existing successful stay at work/return to work programs for state employees.

g. Provide training and information to state personnel (e.g., Disability Program Managers).

KENTUCKY CAN HELP BUILD CAPACITY OF THE PRIVATE AND NONPROFIT SECTORS TO HIRE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

Kentucky recognizes the critical role of public and private providers in inclusiveness for people with disabilities. The Commonwealth further recognizes that improving employment outcomes requires coordinated efforts that cross multiple government sectors.

POLICY OPTIONS

a. The state can provide technical assistance to businesses by leveraging the Kentucky Skills Network's Business Service Teams (led by the Economic Development Cabinet) and business service teams at local career centers (Kentucky's Education & Workforce Development Cabinet) to provide access to dedicated staff members. Those members can advise on disability hiring through agencies like the Vocational Rehabilitation Office and the Office for the Blind, or through intermediaries such as state and local Chambers of Commerce, as well as through existing resources like KentuckyWorks.

b. Develop or use existing databases that include information regarding persons with disabilities who are looking for employment. For example, the CSAVR (Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation) Talent Acquisition Portal could be linked to businesses searching for qualified applicants. Kentucky also has a resource called the FOCUS system through the Kentucky Career Center that could be connected with other employment software systems and the internet.

c. Kentucky can lead in leveraging the talents and attributes of individuals with disabilities, as well as the other four target populations, by encouraging their inclusion as employees of state contractors.

d. The state of Kentucky can convene a summit or summits to bring public and private employers together and incorporate leading business champions in the area of disability employment and hiring from target populations. Such a summit would raise awareness of the opportunity for businesses and would clearly communicate Kentucky's and the Bevin Administration's commitment to include individuals with disabilities in the workforce.

e. Kentucky can explore coordinated strategies to support business hiring efforts, lessen administrative burdens on those businesses, and engage providers in education and outreach to increase resource utilization.

INCREASE FOCUS ON EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS: DISABILITY AWARENESS

POLICY OPTION

Kentucky's Personnel Cabinet can partner with the Economic Development Cabinet and the state Chamber of Commerce to provide awareness training that incorporates a "people first" mindset. Likewise, staff in both the public and private sectors who work with children, youth and adults with disabilities can be trained and certified. The goal of the training would be to raise awareness of the capabilities of those in the disability community as well as sensitivity to the challenges they face, particularly when seeking employment.

INTERAGENCY COORDINATION AND COLLABORATION

With the launch of Kentucky HEALTH (Helping to Achieve Long-Term Health), cross-cabinet collaboration is currently at a high point. For example, connectivity between the Education and Workforce Development Cabinet and the Cabinet for Health and Family Services is high. This connectivity can serve to break down silos and launch joint initiatives. This type of joint effort should ensure that priority policy options outlined in this report (and summarized in the Conclusions section) are implemented.

POLICY OPTIONS

a. Issue an Executive Order implementing an Employment First Initiative, recognizing that work in the general workforce (competitive integrated employment) is the first and preferred outcome in the provision of publicly funded services and supports for all working age citizens with disabilities, regardless of level of disability. The order would not be a mandate to require any employer to give preference to hiring people with disabilities and/or people in the other four target populations. Instead, the order would be a statewide commitment that competitive integrated employment be explored before other non-work day services.

B. LEVERAGE PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN THE CABINETS AND OUTSIDE ENTITIES BY BLENDING AND BRAIDING FUNDING. THESE STRATEGIES ALLOW FUNDS TO BE USED MORE EASILY AND CREATIVELY AT THE POINT OF SERVICE AND DELIVERY. THE WORK MATTERS NATIONAL REPORT: A FRAMEWORK FOR STATES ON WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES DESCRIBES BLENDING AND BRAIDING FUNDS AS, "MECHANISMS THAT POOL DOLLARS FROM MULTIPLE SOURCES AND MAKE THEM IN SOME WAYS INDISTINGUISHABLE." THE REPORT SAYS BRAIDED FUNDS CAN BE USED TO SUPPORT ACTIVITIES SUCH AS COLLABORATION, COORDINATION, PROGRAM PLANNING AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT. BRAIDING REFERS TO A FUNDING AND RESOURCE ALLOCATION STRATEGY THAT TAPS INTO EXISTING CATEGORICAL FUNDING STREAMS AND USES THEM TO SUPPORT UNIFIED INITIATIVES IN A FLEXIBLE AND INTEGRATED MANNER.

c. Expand and improve formal interagency agreements to enhance blending and braiding of funding between agencies, for example interagency agreements between the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Office of the Blind or between the Division of Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities and the Division of Behavioral Health. These agreements will need to be updated as required by Title I of the Rehabilitation Act, as amended by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act [WIOA] (July 2014).

d. Expand Kentucky Trained/Kentucky Built apprenticeship program and other job coaching programs tailored to the capabilities of workers with disabilities. Build the capacity to incorporate these programs among disability employment providers and expand innovative services such as customized employment programs.

e. Establish an accessible one-call, one-click system to match people with disabilities with appropriate transportation and other services.

f. Take advantage of technical assistance provided by the U.S. Department of Labor, specifically its Office of Disability Employment Policy, and the U.S. Department of Education's Rehabilitation Services Administration.

g. Expand the capacity for benefits counseling to youth transitioning from high school, families and guardians, as well as for those seeking employment as a path out of other day program services. The expanded counseling should emphasize that work is a preferred option to benefits due to the improved outcomes it provides to the individual. Add a position in Area Development District offices or within Kentucky's Career Centers for trained individuals to perform this counseling.

PREPARING FOR WORK

PREPARING FOR WORK

EDUCATION AND CAREER READINESS

As families prepare for the transition of their loved ones to become a part of Kentucky's workforce, they may become concerned about the loss of Social Security Insurance (SSI). The counseling referenced in Policy Option G above should educate them as to the effects on SSI, as well as the financial advantages and benefits to well-being that work provides. The counseling and training provided should embed the five pre-employment transition services listed by Title I of the Rehabilitation Act, as amended by WIOA (listed below) into the Individual Education Plan (IEP). Although the Individuals with Disabilities Employment Act does not require inclusions of these into the IEP, the Task Force believes that in doing so, Kentucky will take a critical step toward informing and including families, thus enhancing the likelihood that the transition to work will be successful for their loved one.

These five services include:

- Job exploration counseling
- Work-based learning experiences (may include in-school or after school opportunities and experiences outside the traditional school setting and/or internships)
- Counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs
- Workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living
- Instruction in self-advocacy

POLICY OPTIONS

a. Improve alignment of the IEP with career development plans and coordinated person-centered career readiness programs, such as the Guardianship-Supported Decision Making program.

b. Partner with the school systems to ensure that children and youth with disabilities be included in career readiness and development programs. This training should begin at a young age. The expectation should be set for both students and faculty that these individuals have much to offer the workforce and that most will be able to get on a successful track to employment.

c. Strengthen the capacity of education professionals to design and implement evidence-based, inclusive programs and strategies. One successful example is the University of Kentucky's HDI program that operates via KentuckyWorks.

d. Add drop down boxes within the IEP to ensure that each of the items above is discussed with the family. The goal should be to provide information on every option available to the family during these counseling sessions.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Family support and engagement is perhaps the most important factor influencing the success of individuals in these populations to transition to work. The support and encouragement from family members is invaluable to individuals who are seeking work opportunities and the independence those opportunities can bring. However, these transitions can be a challenge for family members as well. As previously noted, one area of particular concern to these families is how work may affect SSI benefits.

POLICY OPTION

Via the Kentucky Career Centers and/or the Area Development Districts, Kentucky should provide trained benefit counselors to guide families as well as the individuals themselves through the transition process to work. In addition to guidance on the work expectation mentioned earlier in this report, counselors should be prepared to teach families the benefits of work to their loved ones. They should also be able to articulate how benefits are affected and how work can be a superior alternative to benefits alone. Finally, these counselors should engage each affected family in career development planning. The family can provide valuable input into what their loved ones are interested in and areas of work where they may excel.

GETTING TO WORK AND ACCESSING WORK OPPORTUNITIES

GETTING TO WORK AND ACCESSING WORK OPPORTUNITIES

Even when workers with disabilities can access meaningful learning opportunities and experiences, fundamental barriers can still exist. Kentucky can help increase access to employment through straightforward strategies that improve transportation, information, and physical accessibility for workers with disabilities. Increased access to reliable transportation helps workers get to work, and in a larger sense it affords individuals the ability to live independently, find affordable housing, and gain access to other community needs. Day-to-day mobility allows workers to be successful in their employment opportunities. This can be especially impactful for workers who live in rural communities, which is vital for Kentucky as 85 of the 120 Kentucky counties are classified as rural. As Kentucky builds out employment opportunities for workers, additional barriers such as transportation are important to consider.

TRANSPORTATION: RELIABLE, AFFORDABLE, AND ACCESSIBLE

NEARLY AS IMPORTANT AS FAMILY SUPPORT IS THE ACCESS INDIVIDUALS HAVE TO TRANSPORTATION TO AND FROM WORK. KENTUCKY MUST ENSURE THAT TRANSPORTATION IS WIDELY AVAILABLE, RELIABLE, AFFORDABLE AND ACCESSIBLE TO ALL IN ORDER TO SUPPORT ACCESS TO THE WORKPLACE. SOME PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES MAY NOT BE PHYSICALLY ABLE TO DRIVE.

In other populations the individual may no longer have a driver's license or access to a car. There are areas of Kentucky that do not have extensive public transportation systems, particularly in rural counties. Kentucky must make an effort to facilitate transportation options for individuals seeking access to work.

POLICY OPTIONS

a. Kentucky should review and update its state transportation policies and regulations.

b. Kentucky should establish a work group or task force to review strategies for improving transportation access for people with disabilities, using national expertise as a resource from organizations such as the National Conference of State Legislatures and The Council of State Governments (CSG), as well as national transportation and disability organizations.

c. Kentucky should adopt policies and regulations that prioritize transportation options that are reliable and accessible for individuals with disabilities, as well as alternative strategies that address and mitigate challenges for people with disabilities (e.g., using emerging technologies such as autonomous vehicles, rideshares, partnering with taxi companies, and implementing transportation coordination councils).

d. Kentucky should encourage businesses to use government incentives and programs offering transportation options to employees. The interagency collaborations cited elsewhere in this report (e.g., working with the state Chamber of Commerce, etc.) are a great starting point for this option.

ACCESSIBLE INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Information and communication technology (ICT) is one area where the state of Kentucky has significant resources, but where "silos" do exist. In this arena the silos prevent information and data sharing between different software and platforms. This is likely a policy item that can be quickly alleviated by IT professionals.

POLICY OPTIONS

a. Create procurement policies that ensure ICT acquired by state and local government are fully accessible to and usable by people with disabilities and compatible with assistive technology devices.

b. Encourage employers to take steps to level the playing field for applicants and employees with disabilities by the adoption of accessible ICT and supporting the use of assistive technology.

c. Elevate the importance of accessible ICT in design, development and procurement of technology systems.

d. Ensure higher education curricula for technology, engineering, design and architecture including principles of accessibility and universal design.

WORKER ACCESS TO BUILT ENVIRONMENT: HOUSING, INFRASTRUCTURE AND PHYSICAL DESIGN

This Task Force was assembled by Governor Bevin to address barriers to employment. Many of the barriers to employment are physical barriers presented in the workplace. No matter how motivated an individual may be to work, and despite family support, those living with disabilities may need additional support to mitigate these obstacles.

POLICY OPTIONS

a. Enact policies that facilitate complete streets, livable communities, mixed-use development, transit-oriented development, shared mobility, mobility on demand, travel demand management and "Smart Cities" in order to reduce barriers to accessibility and promote the inclusion of people with disabilities in travel.

b. Work with local governments, economic development interests, and metropolitan and rural planning organizations to encourage businesses and residential living facilities to locate in areas with access to transit.

c. Provide assistance to families and individuals in making physical and technological home modifications in order to improve accessibility and promote working at home.

JOB RETENTION AND RETURN TO WORK

JOB RETENTION AND RETURN TO WORK

Once workers enter the labor force, variables such as the onset of a medical condition may impact their ability to continue working. The impacts on individuals, employers, and all levels of government can be significant and long-lasting. The inability to obtain or maintain employment as the result of injury or illness can have a life-changing impact on an individual's health, family finances and quality of life.

Effective stay-at-work and return-to-work policies can act as safeguards against a depletion of the workforce. When used strategically and in a timely manner, these policies can prevent a worker from exiting the workforce and increasing their own barriers to future employment. Workers who participate in stay-at-work/return-to-work programs can protect their jobs and income, avoid long-term unemployment, recover more quickly, stay physically conditioned and mentally alert, and maintain the daily structure and social connections provided by work.

Such policies and programs also help employers. If a qualified, experienced worker experiences an illness or injury and leaves the workforce, the employer must spend resources on hiring and training new workers. On average it can cost up to one third of a new hire's annual salary to replace an employee, and takes a new employee more than 13 months to become efficient at their job. Stay-at-work/return-to-work strategies and programs can help businesses reduce claims and medical costs, return valued and experienced employees to work, retain more workers on the job, and improve productivity.

Additionally, tax revenue is lost when workers exit the labor force and social welfare programs often supplement the lost income. The reduction in the tax base and decreased individual spending resulting from these labor force departures leads to lower overall economic activity. Each year, states lose billions of dollars in tax revenue due to unemployment or underemployment of people with disabilities. Kentucky can benefit from economically independent and self-assured workers. When workers are impacted by life changes such as a medical condition, they often have a difficult time re-engaging with their work even after recovery.

Kentucky can support these workers by implementing stay-at-work/return-to-work programs. The Personnel Cabinet has already demonstrated success in implementing a vibrant return-to-work program. The same principles and policies that have made this program a success can be incorporated into other public and private sector settings to benefit both employers and the populations highlighted in this report. Kentucky can train benefits counselors to help educate people on viable options and help prevent workers from losing their footing financially when life changes affect them. For workers with disabilities, the ABLE Act is a policy option that allows them to make use of tax-advantaged savings accounts for disability expenses. This is an example of a program that provides workers with the opportunity to access viable employment through financial stability.

POLICY OPTIONS

a. Adopt stay-at-work/return-to-work programs in private and public sectors to facilitate the ongoing employment of individuals who experience injuries or illnesses that may impact their ability to work.

b. Promote, educate and encourage the use of reasonable accommodations as "workplace productivity enhancers." The Job Accommodation Network is a free resource on this topic. Examples of specific policy options include:

i. Establishing centralized accommodations funds;

ii. Providing tax incentives to employers to provide accommodations; and

iii. Engaging the Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) to revise the (VR) plan to "give priority to individuals who are otherwise eligible for VR program services [and] are at imminent risk of losing their jobs unless they receive additional necessary... services," as allowable under WIOA's VR State Plan Provisions, and actively serving this newly eligible population to facilitate continued employment.

c. Incorporate job retention and return-to-work policies that have proven successful into the aforementioned benefits counseling. This can also be incorporated at delivery points for both human and workforce services. Training on benefits counseling may also be helpful for health care providers who often serve as key influencers in the direction of injured or ill workers (e.g., return to work, apply for Social Security Disability Information, etc.).

d. Kentucky's STABLE savings program incentivizes people with disabilities and their families to save money. Supplement these existing financial incentives to target disability employment supports and incorporate incentives for foster parents and adoptive parents.

SUPPORTING SELF-EMPLOYMENT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

SUPPORTING SELF-EMPLOYMENT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Workers with disabilities, as well as veterans, foster youth, workers with criminal records, and job seekers battling substance abuse, are untapped resources for public and private sector employers. They are also candidates for self-employment, particularly those with disabilities who are more likely to be self-employed than their non-disabled peers. Kentucky can increase state-wide entrepreneurship by supporting these potential business owners. This is a viable option especially for workers who have difficulty securing traditional job placements. Self-employment, which promotes new business and revenue for the state economy, also benefits the individual by promoting greater autonomy, dignity and career customization opportunities.

Individuals with disabilities face a number of challenges to self-employment similar to those faced by the general workforce. Self-employment training is often not a major component of workforce development or education for individuals within this population. Social stigma can also present itself as a barrier for workers seeking self-employment. Kentucky needs to engage and participate in awareness campaigns to combat the stigma surrounding these workers, especially the notion that disabled individuals can't or won't be successful as business owners. Kentucky can support individuals interested in self-employment by adapting existing business development policies and programs to be inclusive.

VIABILITY OF SELF-EMPLOYMENT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Kentucky cabinets can lead education efforts that encourage entrepreneurship among people with disabilities, as well as the other four target populations in this report. The Lieutenant Governor's Entrepreneurship Challenge could be expanded to target participation from these populations.

POLICY OPTIONS

a. Formal policies that support entrepreneurship and self-employment in state workforce development systems.

b. Position entrepreneurship and self-employment as possible career strategies.

SUPPORT DISABILITY-OWNED BUSINESSES

POLICY OPTIONS

a. Explore opportunities to facilitate and support disability-owned businesses through existing procurement and contracting systems (e.g., create goals and/or bid preferences).

b. Fast-track certification procedures to gain access to contract/vendor opportunities.

c. Explore tax and financial incentives to support start-up and/or growth (e.g., low-interest revolving loans, grants, angel investors, mentoring).

PRODUCED BY THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS AND THE KENTUCKY WORK MATTERS TASK FORCE

PROFILE OF KENTUCKY'S DISABLED AND VETERAN POPULATIONS

PREVALENCE, EDUCATION, AND EMPLOYMENT DATA

AN ESTIMATED 1 IN 8 AMERICANS, NEARLY 40 MILLION, LIVE WITH A DISABILITY.

While expressing an ability, desire and willingness to work in the community and contribute to the economy, many adults and youth with disabilities experience significant barriers to employment. As states strive to promote workforce inclusion, people with disabilities—including veterans with service connected disabilities—are a key part of the solution.

IN 2015, 12.6 PERCENT OF PEOPLE IN THE UNITED STATES REPORTED A DISABILITY.*

IN KENTUCKY, 16.8 PERCENT OF PEOPLE REPORTED A DISABILITY.*

*Non-institutionalized

EMPLOYMENT AND EARNINGS

IN 2015, NON-INSTITUTIONALIZED, AGED 21–64 YEARS

NATIONAL

37.8% OF MEN
WITH A DISABILITY WERE EMPLOYED

32.5% OF WOMEN
WITH A DISABILITY WERE EMPLOYED

KENTUCKY

28.7% OF MEN
WITH A DISABILITY WERE EMPLOYED

24.8% OF WOMEN
WITH A DISABILITY WERE EMPLOYED

THE MEDIAN ANNUAL EARNINGS OF A PERSON WITH A DISABILITY, EMPLOYED FULL-TIME IN KENTUCKY IS $32,800, WHICH IS 81.8 PERCENT OF THE NATIONAL AVERAGE OF $40,100.

WHAT DOES IT COST KENTUCKY?

THE KENTUCKY JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY CABINET ANNOUNCED THAT EIGHT PROGRAMS IN KENTUCKY WILL RECEIVE A TOTAL OF $15.7 MILLION FROM THE STATE BUDGET THIS YEAR TO COMBAT HEROIN AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE.

That's up from the $10 million that was provided in fiscal year 2016. Signed by Gov. Matt Bevin in April, the two-year budget increased funding for antidrug efforts by a total $12 million over the biennium. In addition to this year's sum, the second year of the budget allocates $16.3 million toward substance abuse programs.

The Department of Corrections, or DOC, will receive $1 MILLION for substance abuse treatment programs that help county inmates in local jails. DOC will also receive $1 million to help state inmates in local jails and $1 million for a Naltrexone pilot program. Naltrexone is a medication that helps stave off the desire to use opioids and can be administered to inmates as they leave custody.

Community mental health centers will receive more than $4.3 MILLION to provide substance abuse treatment in local communities throughout the state.

The Kentucky Agency for Substance Abuse Policy will receive $2.75 MILLION to support substance abuse programs across the state.

The Department of Public Advocacy will receive $1.75 MILLION to fund its social worker program, which helps develop alternative sentencing plans.

The Prosecutors Advisory Council will receive $1.2 MILLION to support "rocket docket" prosecutions in cases that involve controlled substances. That matches another $1 million that the council will receive from elsewhere in the budget for a total of $2.2 million.

Established programs that provide services related to neonatal abstinence syndrome and help pregnant women with addiction will be able to apply for $2.5 MILLION in grants.

TOTAL • $15.7 MILLION

PERTINENT STATUTES, POLICIES AND REGULATIONS

ESTABLISHES KENTUCKY AGENCY FOR SUBSTANCE ABUSE POLICY

KENTUCKY REVISED STATUES 15A.340

DUTIES OF THE OFFICE OF DRUG CONTROL POLICY

KENTUCKY REVISED STATUTES 15A.342

ESTABLISHES KENTUCKY COMMISSION ON SERVICES AND SUPPORTS FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH MENTAL ILLNESS, ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUG ABUSE DISORDERS

KENTUCKY REVISED STATUTES 210.502

VETERANS AND SERVICE DISABLED VETERANS

"I WANT KENTUCKY TO BE THE MOST MILITARY-FRIENDLY STATE IN AMERICA."

– GOVERNOR MATT BEVIN

FORWARD

Veterans are an asset for Kentucky's workforce and their positive impact can be expanded. Individuals from a military background are strong in employment skills, often referred to as "soft skills." They know the importance of being on time, the value of a "team first" mentality, and they know how to function as part of a larger unit to achieve goals. These skills, combined with the military training they have received, make them an attractive commodity for employment.

Kentucky ranks fourth in the nation for most active duty Army personnel stationed in-state and twelfth for the number of active duty military personnel. (1) In total, 297,312 Kentucky residents are veterans. However, 7 percent of those aged 18 to 64 were unemployed in 2015. With such a large population of veterans, Kentucky is uniquely positioned to benefit from the influx of more veterans as a valuable labor commodity. Veterans are an example of one of the crossover populations mentioned earlier in this report, as 31.9 percent of veterans have a disability, compared to 19.6 percent of the general population.

Because of the development of the aforementioned employment skills, military personnel may be particularly desirable as employees. It will be worth the extra effort on the part of human resource professionals to "translate" military resumes, work experience and dialect. At the same time, hard skills such as electronics or instrumentation training received in the military may need to be enhanced in order to be viable in industry.

Kentucky can provide assistance in closing a perceived gap between military training and civilian or industrial certifications. "I often say that in the realm of human resources, the military and civilian worlds speak the same language but often have different dialects," said Katie Lopez, Director of Military and Government affairs at the Christian County Chamber of Commerce. "In some cases, the terminology that the military uses to describe a skill-set is different than in the civilian world, even though the skills themselves may translate quite well."

Government entities can serve as liaisons between the private sector and departing veterans to ensure open communication. They can also aid translation of human resource dialects in order to expedite the transfer of military skills to industrial certifications. Government can also connect active military personnel to existing military programs like the Soldier For Life-Transition Assistance Program, which teaches outgoing soldiers everything from interviewing to job search skills. Finally, the continued expansion of public/private partnerships in workforce development can provide veterans with the fast track needed to supplement their military skills and become prime industrial employees. When military personnel are employed in our state, employers, veterans and the Commonwealth of Kentucky all benefit.

(1) Kentucky Commission on Military Affairs: Strategic Plan (pg. 4, paragraph 3)

POLICY OPTIONS

ACADEMIC CREDIT FOR MILITARY SERVICE

All of Kentucky's postsecondary institutions have implemented policies related to credit for prior learning. The American Council on Education (ACE) has issued a Military Guide to assist in the evaluation of educational experiences in the armed services. The Guide provides credit recommendations and detailed summaries for formal courses and occupations offered by all branches of the military.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Enhance the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) and the Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVERS) systems currently administered through the Kentucky Career Centers. Remove silos wherever possible so state and federal entities better compliment one another's efforts.

2. Consult the credit recommendations from the ACE guide and provide feedback and rationale when credits do not meet the ACE credit recommendations.

3. Ensure that academic catalogs and websites clearly communicate to veterans what military-related credit will be awarded and how those credits will be awarded.

4. Encourage institutions to maintain a publicly accessible database of course equivalencies for military training and military occupations that have been evaluated.

5. Provide rationales to limits placed on the number of credits that a student may matriculate into the institution or into a particular academic program.

6. Kentucky should award students the equivalent academic credit when learning outcomes associated with military training and occupational experience are equivalent to those of general education, prerequisite, and major courses.

7. Allow for the transferability of credit earned through military experience at one public institution to another public institution (subject to institutional policy on maximum number of transfer credits) to facilitate degree completion requirements.

8. Ensure academic advisors and admissions counselors are equipped with the materials and professional expertise to meet the unique needs of military students. These advisors should have training and professional development opportunities that help them understand policies related to credit for military experience.

9. Convene advisory groups of administrators, faculty, staff and students to address issues that impact the likelihood of military students to sustain academic tracks, which has an impact on their graduation rate.

10. Appoint a leadership team, preferably consisting of faculty, staff and individuals from the registrar and provost offices to monitor the implementation of policies and practices related to military credit.

PROFESSIONAL LICENSING

Even though a great deal of military training and experience is equivalent to certifications and licenses in the private sector, veterans are often required to repeat that training at their own expense. Kentucky should streamline the process of professional licensing and the interaction with veteran's assistance programs to better provide an efficient distribution of services.

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECIPROCITY

Amend KRS 12.354 to require licensing boards to create military reciprocity through the administrative regulation system and/or Executive Order. In other words, instruct all professional licensing boards under the Executive Branch to examine and develop a military reciprocity process.

REMOVAL OF SILOS

Establish a clearinghouse or "one stop shop" for all military related services provided to active military, military spouses and veterans. The Georgia Veterans Education Career Transition Resource Center (VECTR) is an excellent facility that Kentucky could model. VECTR is near military installations and houses vocational training, college classes and benefits counselling under one roof.

EMPLOYER INCENTIVES

1. Increase employer incentives for hiring service members, military spouses, and veterans. Tax incentives may be one example.

2. Encourage career pathway opportunities for military veterans in the employment sectors of health care, customer service, information technology and logistics.

3. Encourage “priority of service” for service members, military spouses and veterans in private industry employment.

4. Enhance and continue to develop the DVOP and LVER’s systems.

PRODUCED BY THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS AND THE KENTUCKY WORK MATTERS TASK FORCE

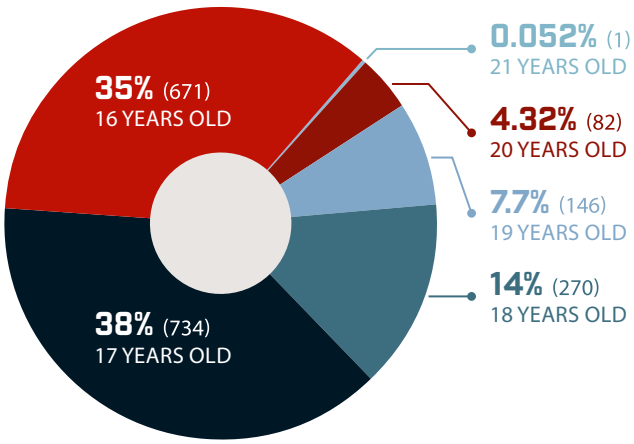
PROFILE OF KENTUCKY'S FOSTER CHILDREN

EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, AND DISABILITY DATA

CHILDREN TRANSITIONING OUT OF THE FOSTER CARE SYSTEM ARE MORE LIKELY THAN THEIR PEERS TO DROP OUT OF HIGH SCHOOL, BECOME PARENTS BEFORE THEY ARE READY, EXPERIENCE HOMELESSNESS, OR END UP IN JAIL.

1,894 TOTAL NUMBER OF **16–21 YEAR OLDS** IN FOSTER CARE IN KENTUCKY

16–21 YEAR OLDS IN CARE



FORMER FOSTER CHILDREN SURVEY

(463 SURVEYED)

90% 17 Year olds currently attending school

46% 19 year olds reported attending school

21% 21 year olds reported attending school

545 TRANSITION PLANS HAVE BEEN COMPLETED IN 2017

25% 17 YEAR OLDS (137)

67% 18 YEAR OLDS (364)

.03% 19 YEAR OLDS (16)

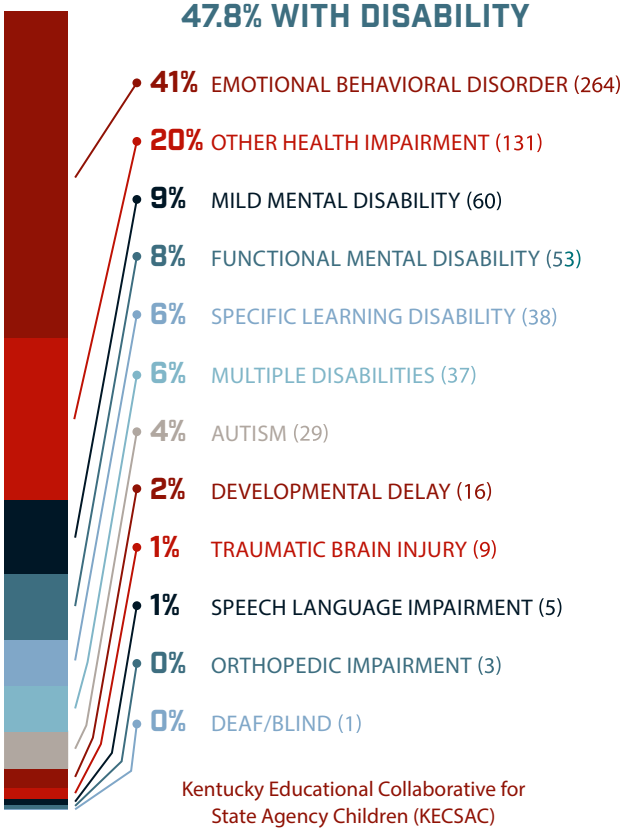
.02% 20 YEAR OLDS (9)

.03% 21 YEAR OLDS (18)

DISABILITY OUTLOOK

TOTAL IN KECSAC PROGRAMS: 1,351

47.8% WITH DISABILITY



Kentucky Educational Collaborative for State Agency Children (KECSAC)

NATIONAL STATISTICS

MORE THAN 23,000 CHILDREN
WILL AGE OUT OF THE U.S. FOSTER CARE SYSTEM EVERY YEAR.

25% The percentage of children who age out of the foster care system and still suffer from the DIRECT EFFECTS OF PTSD.

*

ONLY 50%
of foster kids who age out of the system will have some form of gainful employment by the age of 24.

AFTER REACHING THE AGE OF 18, 20% OF THE CHILDREN WHO WERE IN FOSTER CARE WILL BECOME INSTANTLY HOMELESS.

THE LIKLIHOOD OF CHILDREN WHO HAVE AGED OUT OF FOSTER CARE TO EARN A COLLEGE DEGREE AT ANY POINT IN THEIR LIFE IS LESS THAN 3%.

71% OF FORMER FOSTER CARE YOUTH REPORT ANNUAL INCOME LESS THAN $25,000.

70% OF GIRLS WHO AGE OUT of the foster care system will become pregnant before the age of 21.

THE JOHN CASEY YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES INITIATIVE ESTIMATES A $300,000 COST PER FAILED TRANSITION DUE TO THE COST OF PUBLIC ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS, INCARCERATION COSTS, LOST WAGES & PRODUCTIVITY COST.

Sources: Midwest Evaluation of Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth (2010), John Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative (2013)

FOSTER YOUTH

" I WANT KENTUCKY TO BE THE GOLD STANDARD IN AMERICA FOR PROVIDING LOVE AND CARE TO FOSTER YOUTH."

- GOVERNOR MATT BEVIN

FORWARD

As of December 2017, there were 8,600 children and youth in Kentucky's foster care system. That number is growing as the opioid crisis impacts families across Kentucky. These young people, through no fault of their own, have often been through traumatic, life changing experiences. The foster care system seeks to provide a caring and stable home for children and youth residing in out-of-home care. Still, the financial and employment situation that older foster kids face as they approach age 18, when they age out of the foster care system, is daunting. Sadly, there are currently 1,894 16 to 21 year old's in foster care in Kentucky facing that exact reality.

As foster youth age out of the system, they must answer life-changing questions like, "Where will I go?" and "How will I provide for myself?" Statistics show that a staggering 20 percent of foster care youth become instantly homeless when they reach the age of 18. Not only is this a tragic reality for these individuals, it represents a tremendous cost to the Commonwealth. The John Casey Youth Opportunities initiative estimates that for each individual who failed to transition to adulthood, the state realizes a cost of $300,000 due to the expense of public assistance for these individuals, incarceration costs and lost wages/productivity costs.

Having the state of Kentucky facilitate a successful transition to adulthood is a more caring and effective alternative for young people, and a more cost-effective approach for Kentucky. Foster youth are often working against the clock. A 16-year-old foster youth needs to have the opportunity to become work-ready sooner than most students their age. Without a family to lean on for financial and emotional support, most of these young people will not have the luxury of a period of time to "find themselves."

Kentucky's Fostering Success program is an important step in providing this preparation. Now in its second year, the Fostering Success program provides summer employment for youth aging out of foster care. Via this collaborative program, youth are placed in entry-level positions within state government agencies where they receive job training and leadership skills. At the same time, the Department for Community Based Services (DCBS) Independent Living Program provides additional life skills training and services.

POLICY OPTIONS

Despite these efforts, more work is needed. Currently, only 50 percent of foster kids who age out of the system will have some form of gainful employment by the time they reach the age of 24. Providing these youth with an accelerated path to employment provides them with the stability they desire as well as a potential link to further educational opportunities.

HIGH SCHOOL EQUIVALENCY AT AGE 16

While there are Kentucky statutes currently in place that allow foster youth who are at least 17 to take the high school equivalency test (KRS 156.143), the statute does not exempt them from the compulsory attendance rule in another statute (KRS 150.010). These young people need a path to pursue their GED sooner so that they can more readily participate in dual-credit plans and university classes sooner. Forcing them to attend high school also precludes them from attending adult education programs.

RECOMMENDATION

Revise the statute to exempt foster youth who are enrolled in an adult education program and pursuing their high school equivalency from compulsory school attendance. This will ensure that more foster youth leave the foster care system with at least a high school diploma or equivalency, are able to obtain employment, and have the ability to pursue a trade, vocational training or attend college. It must be emphasized that this early equivalency should only be made available to youth who are pursuing a postsecondary credential on a parallel path. The intent is to more quickly prepare them for a career path, not merely to allow them to complete high school sooner.

EXPAND TUITION WAIVER

KRS 164.2847 allows for the waiver of tuition for foster youth who meet certain criteria defined in the statute. This tuition waiver is available for all four-year universities as well as colleges in the Kentucky Community and Technical College system.

RECOMMENDATION

Revise the statute to expand this eligibility for students who fit the criteria and wish to extend their education to graduate school. Students who are motivated to pursue advanced degrees should be incentivized to do so.

FOSTERING SUCCESS

The aforementioned Fostering Success program has grown in its first two years. In the first year, 52 youth completed the program. In the second year, the number increased to 72. Most of these students worked within state offices, such as the Department of Parks, the Department for Community Based Services, and some of the CHFS offices. However, some youth were able to work with trusted private sector partners as well. These partnerships expand the variety and volume of opportunities for youth who enroll in the program. Likewise, private partnerships can be leveraged to provide employment opportunities in the trades.

RECOMMENDATION

Expand the number of private sector partners involved in the Fostering Success program.

PEER SUPPORTS

Perhaps no counselor, instructor or mentor can have the same impact and credibility as someone who has been through the foster system and made a successful transition to adulthood. Peer support for youth in transition has proven highly beneficial in other states and can be an invaluable resource for youth attempting to navigate the various support programs and benefits that are available.

Use a model similar to DVOP for veterans to create a peer driven program for foster youth. This program would be administered through Kentucky's Career Development Centers or Business Centers to both encourage private sector hiring of foster youth and to connect those youth with job opportunities.

RECOMMENDATION

As post-secondary educational supports for foster youth continue to be developed and expanded, opportunities for peer support, mentoring and case management should be made available as well. Since transportation can be a major challenge for foster youth, these programs should be administered on post-secondary campuses if at all possible.

FOSTER CARE BILL OF RIGHTS

Entering the foster care system can be overwhelming, as can transitioning from the system. Foster youth need to be made aware of what programs and supports are available, as well as what their rights are within the foster care system. Many states now have a Foster Care Bill of Rights. These documents may include provisions requiring foster children to be informed about why they are in foster care and how the process will proceed. Other major features may include information about the ability to participate in extracurricular or community activities; efforts to maintain educational stability; access to guardian ad litems; access to mental, behavioral and physical health care; and access to or communication with siblings and family members if possible.

RECOMMENDATION

Kentucky should establish a foster care bill of rights by statute.

STATEWIDE TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

As with many of the populations discussed in this report, transportation is a significant concern for many foster youths. As such, it is not practical, and sometimes impossible, for them to travel across the state to attend training classes, even if those classes are offered at no charge.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1) Increase the number of financial literacy, job preparation and work etiquette training opportunities across the state. Incorporate existing resources such as Kentucky Career Centers when providing these courses so they are easily accessible.

2) Improve the availability, accessibility and quality of transportation supports for foster youth to commute to work and pursue educational endeavors.

MENTORSHIP AND INDEPENDENT LIVING SUPPORT

IIn addition to job and skills training, foster youth can benefit from help creating a path of life for themselves as they move on from state care. However, many of these young adults are not ready to take this leap as an 18-year-old. Many times, they have no other reliable individuals to turn to for guidance and support. Even something as straightforward as acquiring furnishings for a first apartment can be a daunting task for youths who have no one to ask for advice.

Sunrise Children Services has a successful program based in collaborative efforts between the common-wealth, businesses, churches, technical schools, and post-secondary or technical education programs that enable youth to receive an education, learn a trade, or immediately find gainful employment. Programs that assist youth in finding a part-time job while completing technical school can also be an alternative.

RECOMMENDATIONS

LIFE DIRECTOR

Provide a Life Director for each child/adult in foster care. The Life Director will provide personal support to the foster care recipient intended to improve post-care outcome (i.e. college entrance exam preparation, financial aid forms, job searching, etc.). In addition, the Life Director will provide services until the completion of a post-secondary education or a year post-employment.

LIFE MENTOR

Provide a Life Mentor for each foster care recipient. The Life Mentor will engage with the foster care recipient at least once a week to provide accountability, friendship, instruction, etc.

INDEPENDENT LIVING

Explore possible alignment or collaboration with existing independent living programs and resources within CHFS and nonprofit partners serving other populations. Potentially launch a state-sponsored program where rent is subsidized for an adult transitioning out of the foster care program. Furniture can be donated to these individuals from the state excess warehouses in Frankfort. Donations can be sought from other private sources as well, including local charity or nonprofit organizations.

PRODUCED BY THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS AND THE KENTUCKY WORK MATTERS TASK FORCE

PROFILE OF KENTUCKY'S INCARCERATED POPULATION

EDUCATION, VETERAN STATUS AND RECIDIVISM

23,085 TOTAL INCARCERATED IN JUNE 2017

87% MALE 20,074

13% FEMALE 3,011

OF MORE THAN 23,000 PEOPLE INCARCERATED IN KENTUCKY, THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY WERE MALE: 87%.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

JUNE 2017

0.0% (10) DOCTORAL DEGREE

0.2% (46) GRADUATE DEGREE

0.7% (152) BACHELORS DEGREE

1.4% (325) ASSOCIATE'S DEGREE

0.4% (82) 4TH YEAR COLLEGE

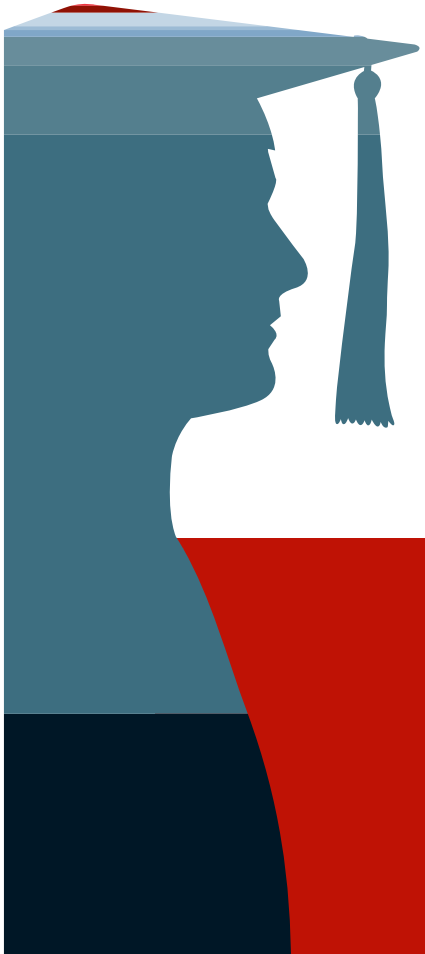
0.7% (162) 3RD YEAR OF COLLEGE

3.0% (693) 2ND YEAR COLLEGE

7.1% (1,641) 1ST YEAR OF COLLEGE

59.8% (13,798) TWELFTH GRADE

26.8% (6,176) 0–ELEVENTH GRADE



ACROSS BOTH GENDERS, MOST OF THE INCARCERATED POPULATION IN KENTUCKY HAS EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF 12TH GRADE OR LESS—87%.

MORE THAN A QUARTER—27%—HAD LESS THAN A 12TH GRADE EDUCATION. LESS THAN 1 PERCENT OF THE INCARCERATED POPULATION HAD A BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR MORE WHILE 7.1% HAD COMPLETED ONE YEAR OF COLLEGE.

Overall, the female incarcerated population has achieved higher levels of education compared to the male population.

20 PERCENT OF THE FEMALE POPULATION HAS ACHIEVED MORE THAN A 12TH GRADE EDUCATION, compared to only 12 percent of the male population.

NATIONAL STATISTICS

CRIMINAL AND JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEMS AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

MORE THAN HALF OF ALL PRISON AND JAIL INMATES HAVE A MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEM.

Among jail inmates, 17.1% of males and 34.3% of females have a "SERIOUS MENTAL ILLNESS".

4% TO 10%
of inmates have an intellectual disability, compared to 2% to 3% of the general population.

20% TO 30% OF INMATES HAVE SOME FORM OF COGNITIVE DISABILITY
(such as traumatic brain injury, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder or specific learning disabilities such as dyslexia), compared to less than 5% in the general population.

THE EXPERIENCE OF INCARCERATION, WHICH INCLUDES ISOLATION AND ADDITIONAL PHYSICAL AND MENTAL TRAUMAS, CAUSES AND EXACERBATES DISABILITIES.

Reports show that
MORE THAN 25%
of the people shot and killed by police are individuals with mental illness.

UP TO 80% OF INCARCERATED YOUTH
are believed to have a special education disability, but only about 33% are identified as having a disability. The reported rate is far higher than the rate found in public school programs.

Kentucky data provided by the Kentucky Department of Corrections. Educational attainment data is self-reported.

CSG The Council of State Governments

THE KENTUCKY WORK MATTERS TASK FORCE

INDIVIDUALS WITH CRIMINAL RECORDS

"AMERICA HAS ALWAYS BEEN A LAND OF OPPORTUNITY AND SECOND CHANCES. WHEN WE HOLD INDIVIDUALS FULLY ACCOUNTABLE FOR THEIR ACTIONS WHILE TREATING THEM WITH RESPECT IN THE PROCESS, ALL OF SOCIETY BENEFITS."

– GOVERNOR MATT BEVIN

FORWARD

Imagine that you are an individual who will soon be released from prison. You strongly desire to turn your life around. You have attended vocational training and/or received an academic degree while in prison. Yet, upon your release, you find multiple barriers to employment. Something as seemingly basic as presenting an ID upon entering a building becomes an insurmountable barrier, because your ID was lost, damaged or expired during your incarceration. Ultimately, not only are you unable to get a job, you are not even able to get an interview. Desperate, what are you most likely to do? Statistics show that you are very likely to resort once again to the commission of a crime.

Until very recently, this was the case for many Kentuckians who had paid their debt to society. Thankfully, Kentucky has worked proactively – and in advance of this Task Force – to address some of these issues within criminal justice. Here are some examples of what has been done:

- **Expungement:** Governor Bevin was a vocal advocate for felony expungement reform in Kentucky. This measure allows certain low-level felons to expunge their records once they have completed the terms of their criminal sentence.

- **Fair Chance Employment:** Governor Bevin boosted reentry efforts by issuing an executive order to promote fair chance hiring in state government. The order required all executive branch employers to remove any questions regarding criminal convictions from job applications, giving returning citizens a fair chance to interview for state jobs.

- **CJPAC:** The governor formed the 23-member Criminal Justice Policy Assessment Council (CJPAC) to study data-driven evidence and recommend reforms that will lower recidivism through better prison reentry services in corrections.

- **Senate Bill 120**: A result of the CJPAC's work, SB 120 prohibited state government employers and licensing boards from arbitrarily denying jobs and professional licenses based solely on a prior criminal conviction. It also authorized creation of the Prison Industry Enhancement Certification Program (PIE), which gives private employers access to prisoners, expanded job training and employment opportunities for inmates.

- **Reentry and Substance Abuse:** The Department of Corrections (DOC) is reorganizing its Reentry Branch to maximize the state's return on investment in inmates. The reorganization will provide a higher level of coordination with private employers and organizations that can help inmates secure housing and transportation as they return to society.

- **Justice to Journeyman:** Governor Bevin has promoted several cross-cabinet initiatives aimed at improving re-entry and reducing recidivism. Those efforts include a new apprenticeship program that resulted from a partnership between the Kentucky Labor and Justice and Public Safety cabinets. It gives both adult and juvenile offenders an opportunity to earn nationally-recognized journeyman credentials in skilled trades while inside correctional facilities.

These efforts are significant and impactful. However, in some cases, training for a trade and developing skills in prison are still not adequately connected to job placement. Studies show that upon release, obtaining a job as quickly as possible is significantly more effective to deterring recidivism than delayed employment.

POLICY OPTIONS

IDENTIFICATION

As mentioned in the introduction, most individuals who have been incarcerated find themselves without state identification after serving their sentence because their previous documentation expired or was lost or damaged while they were incarcerated. People who obtain state identification before their release from jail or prison are better able to access services and supports more quickly, providing a greater opportunity for successful integration into the community.

RECOMMENDATION

Provide state-issued identification and other related documentation prior to release from prison.

EMPLOYER LIABILITY PROTECTION

An employer willing to give a second chance to one with a criminal record should be applauded, not sued. Despite employers' best efforts and motives, not every hire will work out as hoped or anticipated. Should a new hire reoffend, employers must be protected from being sued solely on the basis that the suspect was their employee at the time the crime was committed. If employers are not protected in this way, the risk of offering a second chance may be perceived as too great.

RECOMMENDATION

Participate in and promote the federal bonding program that provides no cost fidelity bonds for returning citizens and other hard to place job applicants who face barriers to employment. Draft legislation as necessary to fill the gaps not addressed by this program that would ensure the protection of employers who hire ex-offenders from liability if that new hire offends during the employment tenure.

EDUCATION/TRAINING

On-site training and education opportunities are improving for Kentucky's inmates through collaboration with the Justice Cabinet, the Education and Workforce Development Cabinet, Kentucky Adult Education, KCTCS and other nonprofit partners. Policy makers and stakeholders should ensure that the training provided can lead to high-quality employment opportunities upon release.

RECOMMENDATION

Continue to improve training programs available to those who are incarcerated by expanding partnerships with private sector employers such as Justice to Journeymen.

EMPLOYMENT SKILLS

Even as legal barriers to employment are removed and as those leaving incarceration are provided with training opportunities, they may still lack the soft skills required by employers. Make the Kentucky Essential Skills Certificate and other local and regional tools available within facilities when possible. These certificates can be a critical component of re-entry programs.

RECOMMENDATION

Provide soft-skill development programs to promote an individual's success in the workplace. Employment skills include being on time, how to project professionalism, conflict management, time management, etc. This training should be provided to inmates prior to release and can continue on the job.

One key to successful re-entry is for individuals to gain employment rapidly. The sooner those with criminal records are employed, the less likely they are to reoffend. Build on existing models that allow career counselors to work prior to release as essential team members during the re-entry process. Transitional job placement opportunities, often within state agencies, can also play an important role. These subsidized employment programs provide work experience, skill development and support services to improve an individual's competitiveness in the job market. The transitional employment program can also include facilitation from the temporary transitional job to permanent employment.

RECOMMENDATION

Kentucky should develop its own transitional employment program utilizing best practices from existing programs in other states.

INTERVENTIONS

As the infographic beginnin this section reflects, over half of all the 23,085 individuals incarcerated in Kentucky have a mental health condition. Incarceration, which can include isolation along with additional physical and mental traumas, can exacerbate these conditions. In some cases, incarceration may trigger a new condition in an individual who did not previously have a mental health condition.

RECOMMENDATION

Provide supports for individuals with disabilities, including individuals with serious mental health conditions, learning disabilities, substance use disorders, and logistical challenges post-incarceration, such as housing, clothing, identification, transportation, child care, etc.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS:

a) Provide retention and advancement services. Assist individuals post job placement with any issues that may impact retention.

b) Establish financial work incentives. Provide supplemental monthly cash payments that encourage job retention.

c) Expand outreach around hiring incentives for employers. Financial incentives are available to encourage employers to consider qualified ex-offenders including the Federal Bonding Program, Work Opportunity Tax Credit, and the Welfare to Work program, and State Tax Credits for hiring ex-felons.

d) Prohibit blanket employment bans. Lift blanket bans on employment or licensing on potential employees involved in arrests that did not lead to convictions.

e) Promote access to transportation by amending driving restrictions. Driving privileges are often essential to finding and maintaining work, yet many states ban ex-offenders' access to driver's licenses.

f) Lift or minimize ban on income subsidies.

g) Use a model similar to the veterans DVOP program to create a peer driven program for those in this population. This program would be administered through Kentucky's Career Development Centers or Business Centers to both identify private sector partners who are willing to hire those in recovery and to connect those individuals with employers.

PRODUCED BY THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS AND THE KENTUCKY WORK MATTERS TASK FORCE

PROFILE OF KENTUCKY SUBSTANCE ABUSE

INCARCERATION, EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

SUBSTANCE ABUSE IS AN EVER GROWING EPIDEMIC IN THE UNITED STATES.

Current substance abuse prevention efforts focus on prescription opioids due to their high overdose death rates. Overall, substance abusers are more likely to be incarcerated, have lower educational attainment, and have a hard time finding employment.

OVERDOSE DEATHS IN 2015

NATIONAL DRUG OVERDOSE DEATH RATE	KENTUCKY DRUG OVERDOSE DEATH RATE
17.8 PER 100,000	29.9 PER 100,000

KY RANKS THIRD ON THIS LIST
(tied with OH)

INCARCERATION

NATIONAL FEDERAL PRISONERS WITH DRUG RELATED SENTENCE	KENTUCKY FEDERAL PRISONERS WITH DRUG RELATED SENTENCE
36.6%	52.2%

KY RANKS THIRD ON THIS LIST

TOP 5 KENTUCKY COUNTIES

WITH THE MOST OVERDOSE DEATHS IN 2016

- JEFFERSON | 322
- FAYETTE | 115
- KENTON | 82
- CAMPBELL | 67
- BOONE | 42

WITH THE MOST CONTROLLED SUBSTANCE DOSES DISPENSED PER 1,000 RESIDENTS IN 2016

- OWSLEY | 275,197
- BELL | 268,482
- FLOYD | 255,549
- PERRY | 251,512
- CLAY | 248,968

NATIONAL STATISTICS

AGE

YOUNG ADULTS (18–25)

ABUSE PRESCRIPTION DRUGS more than any other demographic.

ADHD MEDICATIONS, OPIOIDS AND ANTI-ANXIETY MEDICATIONS are some of the top prescription drugs abused by this population.

MORE THAN **1,700**

YOUNG ADULTS DIED in the United States in 2014 from prescription overdoses.

This equates to

5 YOUNG ADULTS

DYING EVERY DAY IN 2014 due to prescription drug abuse.

GENDER

MORE MEN THAN WOMEN

DIE FROM OVERDOSES regardless of the drug.

HOWEVER

WOMEN HAVE HAD LARGER PERCENT INCREASES IN OVERDOSES FOR ALMOST ALL DRUGS.

OPIOID OVERDOSE DEATHS 1999–2015

WOMEN increase of **583%**

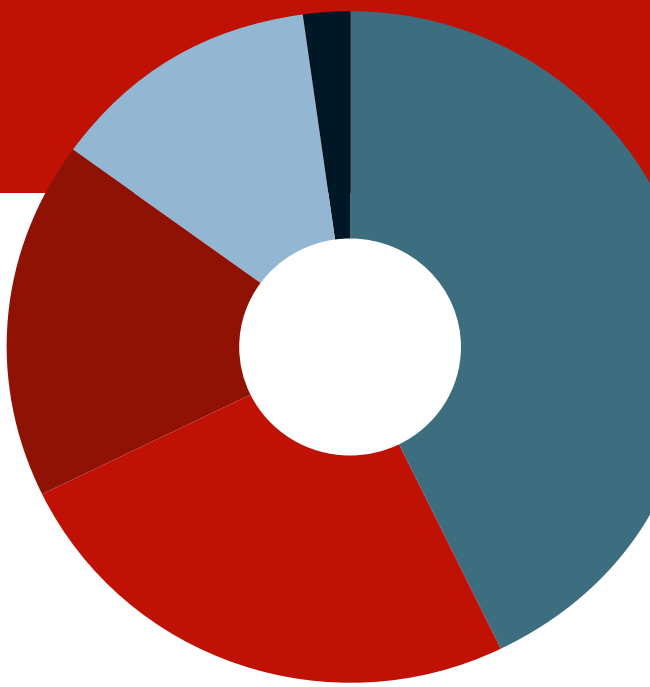
MEN increase of **400%**

The rate of substance dependence or abuse in 2012 for males ages 12 and up was 10.7%, which was greater than the rate for females, 5.7%.

THERE WERE A TOTAL OF 52,404 OVERDOSE DEATHS IN 2015.

The top five causes of overdose deaths in 2015 were:

- **43%** Prescription Opioids (22,598)
- **25%** Heroin (12,989)
- **17%** Benzodiazepines (8,791)
- **13%** Cocaine (6,784)
- **2%** Other (1,242)



INDIVIDUALS WITH SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS

"WHEN IT COMES TO AIDING THOSE RECOVERING FROM SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS, ACTION MATTERS. PROVIDING AN OPPORTUNITY FOR MEANINGFUL WORK CAN BE AN IMPORTANT COMPONENT TO RECOVERY."

– GOVERNOR MATT BEVIN

FORWARD

Tragically, substance abuse is an ever-growing epidemic in the United States and in Kentucky. Current substance abuse prevention efforts are focusing more on prescription opioids due to their high overdose death rates. Overall, substance abusers are more likely to be incarcerated, have lower educational attainment and thus have a harder time finding employment.

Past conventional wisdom regarding the treatment/rehabilitation of people with substance abuse disorders has centered on treating the individual for the addiction. Once the addiction was mitigated, it may have been assumed that other facets of that individual's life would begin to fall into place. In particular, there has not been an emphasis on the important positive impact that the opportunity to work can have on those in recovery.

It should be understood by policy makers that unemployment may have played a role in an individual becoming addicted in the first place. In those instances, if the state of Kentucky can facilitate employment for these Kentuckians, they can play a pivotal role in helping alleviate one root cause. As with other populations that are the focus of this study, the opportunity to work can provide those in recovery with improved self-esteem. Self-esteem combined with the accountability that work requires can become key tools that help ensure sobriety continues after treatment.

The workplace also allows individuals in treatment and recovery programs to form new peer groups where individuals in the group value and reflect positive employment skills, such as reporting to work on time and high productivity. In addition, employees in good standing tend to reflect a life of sobriety and responsibility, which can provide positive role models and additional motivation to remain sober.

Finally, the workplace itself provides incentives to maintain sobriety. The majority of job applicants are now subjected to drug tests with 57 percent of prospective employers conducting testing. (2) Once employed, recovering individuals may be subjected to on the job drug testing.

Obviously, substance abuse is a complex issue and may have a variety of triggers and contributing factors that are specific to the individual. However, policy recommendations of this Task Force have been selected to be impactful for a broad spectrum of this population.

Kentucky has led the nation on this issue. The commonwealth was chosen to host the 6th annual 2017 Residential Substance Abuse Treatment Work Shop after the federal Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) recognized the DOC's innovative Medically-Assisted Treatment (MAT) pilot project, which offers inmates long-acting naltrexone injections one month prior to release and on the day of their release. Upon release, correctional officials ensure that returning inmates schedule their next injection during their first meeting with their respective probation and parole officers. This handoff ensures that the inmate continues to receive the naltrexone injections as part of his or her treatment regimen while on parole or any other type of correctional supervision, thereby increasing the likelihood that the returning inmate maintains sobriety through continued MAT.

In addition to the groundbreaking MAT pilot project, the DOC has increased evidence-based substance abuse treatment slots well over 1,000 percent (3) since 2010, which is critical to improving reentry outcomes and reducing recidivism among DOC inmates with substance use disorders.

The following policy options are presented with the progress that Kentucky has already made on the critical issue of substance abuse in mind. Emphasis should be placed on policies in this section that aid in treatment and recovery as they move those with substance abuse disorders to employability.

(2) Stacy Hicox, Its Time to Reign In Random Drug Testing http://harvardlpr.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Hickox.pdf (bottom of pg. 421)

(3) https://corrections.ky.gov/about/Documents/Research%20and%20Statistics/Annual%20Reports/HB%20463%20Report%20on%20Evidence%20 20Based%20Practices%20and%20ProgramsFY%2014.pdf

POLICY OPTIONS

COMMUNICATION

Develop communications campaigns as well as targeted resources and curricula for teens, parents, criminal justice professionals and health care providers. Let them know that vocational and career counseling opportunities outlined elsewhere in this report are available to them as well.

COUNSELING

Invest in counseling and recovery service providers. Work closely with these providers to offer effective resources and assistance to participants to embed education and career planning options at the appropriate time. Combine counseling for addiction with career counseling.

PEER SUPPORT CAREER PATHWAYS

Once individuals have successfully completed treatment and are clean and sober for one year, they can pursue career opportunities as peer support specialists. Kentucky has pioneered the development of a career pathway credential. Kentucky has accumulated very promising early data about the use of these specialists in a variety of roles in the treatment and recovery arena. More work in this area will benefit the commonwealth and provide real career opportunities and sustainable wages for many individuals. Those recovering from substance use disorders will also benefit greatly from transitional employment. Kentucky can build on existing models that allow career counselors to work prior to release as essential team members during the re-entry process. Transitional job placement opportunities, often within state agencies, can also play an important role. These subsidized employment programs provide work experience, skill development, and support services to improve an individual's competitiveness in the job market. The transitional employment program can also include facilitation from the temporary transitional job to permanent employment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A) Kentucky should develop its own transitional employment program utilizing best practices from existing programs in other states.

B) Use a model similar to the veterans DVOP program to create a peer driven program for those in this population. This program would be administered through Kentucky's Career Development Centers or Business Centers to both identify private sector partners who are willing to hire those in recovery, and to connect those individuals with employers.

C) Develop a position in each workforce region on the business services team whose sole purpose it is to identify employers willing to hire people who are struggling with addiction and recovery.

D) Develop a model employer assistance program based on best practices and offered as a part of business services to employers willing to establish it in their own businesses. This will help ensure that these employees are retained as well as ensuring that those in recovery have a support system at work and a job to come back to if they relapse.

E) Develop a recovery peer support credential training program in workforce areas with high concentrations of substance abuse recovery centers. Research shows peer support counselors are highly successful and in high demand. This is a position that can only be filled by someone who has suffered from addiction or is a family member of one who has.

F) Develop a residential recovery/workforce center that could be used for a diversion program for those charged with a drug related offense, or re-entry program for those transitioning out of incarceration. The center would offer training in high demand fields with supportive services to help in recovery.

TREATMENT

Ensure Medicaid assisted treatment is available to those seeking employment.

CONCLUSIONS

Each population addressed in this report can bring unique attributes and valuable skills to Kentucky's workforce. However, these populations also have unique needs that must be met in order to optimize their effectiveness. Governor Bevin's vision is for Kentucky's workforce to become a resource that attracts employers to expand to the commonwealth and its most attractive resources. The individuals addressed in this report will become an integral part of making that vision a reality once policies are implemented that ensure their inclusion.

As stated in the forward to this report, the Kentucky Work Matters Task Force recommends that policy recommendations that benefit crossover populations should be addressed since those policies provide benefits to the greatest number of people. Some of those "crossover" policy recommendations are highlighted in the graphic below.

POLICY OPTIONS
EMPLOYER INCENTIVES/THROUGHOUT REPORT
EXECUTIVE ORDER IMPLEMENTING AN EMPLOYMENT FIRST INITIATIVE
BUILD CAPACITY OF OTHER EMPLOYERS TO HIRE FROM TARGET POPULATIONS/PAGE 6 B, C, D
INCREASE FOCUS ON EMPLOYMENT BARRIER DISABILITY AWARENESS/ PAGE 6, C
REMOVAL OF SILOS, INTERAGENCY COORDINATION/ PAGE 7 D
RELIABLE, ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION/PAGE 10 A,B,C

In addition, the following policy recommendations can be characterized as "low hanging fruit". If possible these policy items can and should be addressed as first priority after the crossover recommendations above:

POLICY OPTIONS
FAMILY ENGAGEMENT/ PREPARING FOR WORK/ PAGE 9
SYNCRONIZE INTERAGENCY COMMUNICATION AND TECHNOLOGY/THROUGHOUT
BUILT ENVIRONMENT ACCESSIBILITY/ PAGE 12
PROFESSIONAL LICENSING RECIPROCITY/PAGE 15-16
FOSTER YOUTH BILL OF RIGHTS/PAGE 19
PEER SUPPORT MODELS/THROUGHOUT
FOSTER YOUTH HIGH SCHOOL EQUIVALENCY AT 18
EXPAND TUITION WAIVER/PAGE 18
ACADEMIC CREDIT FOR MILITARY SERVICE/PAGE 15
EXPAND FOSTERING SUCCESS/PAGE 18

MEASURING SUCCESS

Task force members are currently working with the Kentucky Center for Education and Workforce Statistics (KCEWS) to set labor force participation improvement targets for the commonwealth as a whole and for specific target populations. Once these targets are set, they will become key success metrics for the Task Force effort. These metrics will allow Kentucky to gauge the extent to which the "needle is being moved" on labor force participation for the five target populations.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF TASK FORCE MEMBERS:

http://apps.sos.ky.gov/Executive/Journal/execjournalimages/2017-MISC-2017-0346-250198.pdf

https://www.lanereport.com/78342/2017/06/gov-bevin-announces-creation-of-kentucky-work-matters-task-force/

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