

## 2023 Recommendations

To advance state workforce efforts, RETAIN Kentucky, through its Inclusive Worker Health Leadership Network, made the following recommendations to the governor:



### RECOMMENDATION #1

Direct the relevant state agency or department to establish an educational training program for employers, including HR managers, to increase employer awareness of workplace accommodations and disability employment issues with emphasis on the following:

- Increasing access to reasonable accommodations in the workplace and removing employment barriers for Kentuckians with disabilities to grow Kentucky's workforce and address its labor shortage.
- Improving limited or lack of awareness and understanding about disability employment issues, including access to workplace accommodations to positively impact Kentucky's workforce development efforts and economic advancement.
- Dispelling [common myths](#) related to disability and employment by increasing employer and employee awareness through efforts such as Employment First and [Kentucky's State Plan for Workforce Development](#).



### RECOMMENDATION #2

Direct the relevant state agency or department to establish a centralized and accessible portal or website focused on stay-at-work and return-to-work best practices for employers, healthcare providers, and employees.

- A centralized and accessible portal should include (though not be limited to) the following:
  - standardized communication templates;
  - access to [Dictionary of Occupational Titles \(DOT\)](#)/[Occupational Information Network \(O\\*NET\)](#) job descriptions;
  - the [win-win approach to reasonable accommodations](#);
  - [Department of Labor \(DOL\) physical demand categories](#);
  - University of Kentucky Human Development Institute's Mental Capacities Checklist (available in appendix A on the [RETAIN](#) website).



### RECOMMENDATION #3

Direct the relevant state agency or department to facilitate a statewide network of groups and programs, in consultation with Kentucky's Employment First Council, to highlight people with disabilities as an untapped talent pool. The network should:

- 1) actively identify and connect people with disabilities and employers
- 2) intentionally engage the talent of Kentuckians with disabilities to promote competitive integrated employment and an increasingly skilled and diverse workforce.

Kentucky is experiencing a significant workforce shortage with slow growth in its workforce over the last 20 years and low rates of participation. Kentucky's workforce participation rate historically has been in the bottom 10 states. According to the [2021 Chamber Workforce Report](#), Kentucky was third lowest in the nation in June 2021 and seventh lowest in 2022.

In addition, the commonwealth has one of the highest disability rates in the nation and one of the lowest employment rates among its citizens with disabilities at 33.7%. Even though this is a largely untapped talent pool, people with disabilities often are intentionally excluded in plans and efforts focused on talent pipeline management.

Ranking at 48th in the nation and behind all seven of its border states, Kentucky has one of the highest employment gaps in the U.S. between people with and without disabilities. The [2023 Annual Disability Statistics Compendium](#) shows 76% of Kentuckians without disabilities are employed compared to 33.7% of people with disabilities, a 42.3% difference.

To promote an inclusive workforce, Employment First became [law](#) in July 2022. As a result, Kentucky established the Employment First Council and now promotes competitive, integrated employment in the general workforce as the first and preferred option for working-age individuals with disabilities who desire employment.

Employment First will help ensure meaningful employment, fair wages and career advancement for Kentuckians with disabilities. It will significantly advance efforts to realize a truly inclusive workforce in Kentucky, strengthen its economy and improve the quality of life for citizens with disabilities across the commonwealth.

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### **Inclusive Workforce Health Leadership Network. (2023). Annual Report to the Governor - Year Two. RETAIN Kentucky.**

[www.kyretain.org/about-retain/annual-report-recommendations/](http://www.kyretain.org/about-retain/annual-report-recommendations/)

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