



## Commonwealth of Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services

Andy Beshear, Governor

Eric Friedlander, Secretary

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### **Kentucky Launches Program to Help Employers Retain Workforce, Provide Access to Treatment for Addiction**

*Collaborative effort unites state government, health care and business communities*

**FRANKFORT, KY (Sept. 21, 2021)** – Gov. Andy Beshear is encouraging employers to join a new program that helps ensure workplace policies align with the mission of opioid response and create pathways for more Kentuckians to access evidence-based, compassionate treatment and recovery services.

Business leaders and health advocates recently gathered virtually to launch the new initiative, known as the Kentucky Transformational Employment Program (KTEP), which resulted from legislation signed into law by the Governor in 2020.

“Kentucky employers have been greatly impacted by the opioid epidemic, experiencing challenges in hiring, absenteeism, productivity, retention, and health care spending,” said Gov. Beshear. “I signed Senate Bill 191 because we recognize the complexity of this issue and the challenges our employers face to ensure workplace policies align with the needs of their workforce. No one can do this work alone and it is imperative we support employers in their efforts to hire and support employees impacted by addiction.”

KTEP helps Kentucky employers find and retain the workforce they need to support and grow their businesses by outlining steps to facilitate access to treatment for current and prospective employees. In turn, more individuals with an addiction gain access to high quality, evidence-based treatment and are able to maintain employment.

“The partnerships that have led to the creation of KTEP are a shining example of the teamwork required to assure our efforts are successful for every single Kentuckian who needs us,” said Lt. Governor Jacqueline Coleman, who helped kick off KTEP recently. “Through KTEP, we can address the needs our employers and their employees and move toward an economy that works for everyone.”

The partners that joined together to launch the initiative include: [Cabinet for Health and Family Services](#) (CHFS), [Kentucky Opioid Response Effort](#) (KORE), [Office of Drug Control Policy](#) (ODCP), [Kentucky Chamber of Commerce](#), and the [Kentuckiana Health Collaborative](#).

“Too often, individuals with a substance use disorder are faced with structural barriers to accessing treatment and services, including barriers to finding employment or accessing services through their employment. Even when treatment is available, stigma can stand in the way of seeking help,” said CHFS Secretary Eric Friedlander. “Our goal is to assure services are available statewide and delivered in a way that is accessible, equitable, evidence-based, and person-centered. Employment policies and programs are essential components to building this recovery-oriented system of care.”

“Transformational employment for those in recovery is a critical component to Kentucky continuing the fight against the drug epidemic,” said Van Ingram, executive director of the Kentucky Office of Drug Control Policy (ODCP). “KTEP is one more step forward in removing barriers to a successful recovery journey by helping Kentuckians stay on a pathway of healing. I appreciate all our second chance employers for providing an avenue for our fellow brothers and sisters to achieve their goals and contribute to creating a better Kentucky.”

Historically, Kentucky has struggled with low workforce participation with the commonwealth currently ranking 48th in the nation, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Low workforce participation is linked to low-level crimes such as drug-related offenses, high levels of recidivism and even overdose deaths.

Research shows that when the nation’s unemployment rate increases by just one percentage point, the opioid-related overdose death rate rises by 3.6 percent.

ODCP awarded the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce Foundation \$375,000 in grant funding through The Recovery Friendly Workplace Initiative to assist with the operations of KTEP by helping to increase the number of employable individuals in Kentucky, improve talent retention and support people in recovery. KORE, a part of CHFS, awarded an additional \$194,000 to the Kentuckiana Health Collaborative to develop program guidelines and trainings, as well as conduct employer focus groups prior to the KTEP launch.

Employers who implement KTEP and its guidelines will not be liable for a civil action alleging negligent hiring, negligent retention or negligent acts by the employee because of an employee’s addiction.

“Fair chance employment isn’t only about opening doors and breaking down barriers for individual Kentuckians – it’s about helping us to thrive and flourish as a state,” said Lakisha Miller, executive director of the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce Workforce Center. “It can have a transformative impact on individuals in recovery and has the potential to strengthen our workforce and economy like never before.”

“KTEP will maximize employer’s engagement in supporting their employees who are impacted by substance use,” said Natalie Middaugh, community health program manager for the Kentuckiana Health Collaborative. “Connecting employees with evidence-based substance use disorder treatment means ensuring services are high quality, equitable, and affordable. Self-insured or fully insured employers should utilize resources from the KTEP program to ensure their benefits are directing employees to these services.”

More information, including enrollment in KTEP, can be found [online](#). Employers interested in learning more about addressing opioids in the workplace can check out [this resource](#) from the Kentuckiana Health Collaborative.

*Public Health; the Department for Aging and Independent Living; and the Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities. CHFS is one of the largest agencies in state government, with nearly 8,000 full- and part-time employees located across the Commonwealth focused on improving the lives and health of Kentuckians.*