



# Case Manager Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ):

## CT DDS STEP

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### Acronyms

This document uses the following acronyms:

<b>CCH</b>	Community Companion Home
<b>CE</b>	Customized Employment
<b>CLA</b>	Community Living Arrangement
<b>CRS</b>	Continuous Residential Supports
<b>DDS</b>	Department of Developmental Services
<b>EDS</b>	Employment and Day Services
<b>ETS</b>	Employment Transitional Services
<b>GSE</b>	Group Supported Employment
<b>IHS</b>	Individualized Home Supports
<b>ISE</b>	Individualized Supported Employment
<b>RAP</b>	Rental Assistance Program
<b>STEP</b>	Supporting Transformation to Empower People

### DDS Provider FAQ

In addition to this resource for Case Managers, it may be helpful to reference the DDS Provider FAQ directed toward providers creating transformational plans through STEP. That document is located [HERE](#) on the Provider Gateway and in the DDS Intranet STEP folder. It addresses topics including:

- STEP incentive payment details
- STEP plan flexibility and timelines



- STEP plan budget sheet
- One-time requests and other funding sources for STEP
- Rent support

## General Questions

### 1. What does STEP stand for? What does it mean?

STEP stands for Supporting Transformation to Empower People. STEP encourages more individualized supports. It empowers people to live more independently and mitigates barriers to change. STEP aims to create more community-focused and person-centered options for individuals receiving supports. STEP will make it easier for providers to assist individuals who are looking to increase their independence and community involvement. Case managers should support discussions with individuals receiving supports in congregate settings about how STEP can help to improve their quality of life.

### 2. Who will be part of STEP?

STEP is open to all providers operating congregate settings for DDS programs, as well as to providers who accept individuals from congregate settings to more independent community-based support options. This includes residential, day, and employment supports. Participating providers must submit a STEP Plan to their region outlining the transformation including individual transitions and any restructuring efforts taking place. As a part of STEP, individuals will be asked to consider transitions into new and expanded support options. If someone wants to transition and their provider chooses not to participate in the STEP transformation process, they can consider portability to move to a provider with non-congregate options whether or not that provider is participating in STEP. Case managers should work closely with individuals, families, and providers to ensure person-centered supports are provided that best meet their goals. Value-based decision making where individuals have options to stretch to new levels of independence is an important part of STEP with support across divisions of DDS. Providers have been encouraged to collaborate with case managers throughout the transition process and during planning. If you are having challenges coordinating with a provider, please discuss with your case manager supervisor and regional resource administrator.

### 3. If an individual gets residential, day, or employment supports in a group setting, will they have to move?

No. STEP will create more options for individuals including current group settings and new, more individualized supports. DDS set a goal to support 300 interested individuals to transition from congregate settings into more independent community-based settings for both day and residential programs. People have the choice to move, based on their goals. Case managers and providers will work with individuals they support who choose to move to a more independent setting.

### 4. What training and education materials exist to educate individuals, families, and case managers about the different options available?

The [STEP Portal](#) on the DDS website has links to educational materials including:

- STEP Fact Sheet: Describes what STEP is, how it impacts individuals, and how to get involved
- STEP Video Series: Video testimonials providing real-life examples of individuals in DDS residential and employment supports
- STEP Email Updates: An archive of all the STEP newsletters shared with individuals and families since the beginning of the initiative and instructions on how to sign up for future updates

Also included are one-page descriptions of community-based services, Commissioner Forums, and a resource section on the DDS website. Case managers can use these materials with individuals and families, and they can also access it themselves through the DDS website and social media.

The STEP Landing Page on [Inside DDS \(DDS Intranet\)](#) has case manager specific information including recordings of STEP webinars and educational materials.

#### **5. Is it the intention of DDS to close all group homes?**

The goal of this initiative is not to close any or all group homes. There are incentives for providers to restructure group homes to provide supports to individuals with significant medical, behavioral, or clinical support needs. Although some providers may decide to close a home for a variety of reasons, this is not the focus of this initiative. Case managers may need to support transition planning for individuals between CLA or CRS supports if their current home is closing, even if the individual is not transitioning through STEP.

### Residential Supports

#### **1. What does STEP mean for residential supports?**

STEP will support interested individuals to move from group settings, like Community Living Arrangements (CLA) or Continuous Residential Supports (CRS), to more independent community-based options. Examples of more independent settings include using Individualized Home Supports (IHS) in their own home or moving into a Community Companion Home (CCH). As some individuals transition to other community-based options, CLAs will have more capacity to support other individuals who have greater support needs including people on the residential emergency list.

#### **1. Can rent subsidy cover security deposits?**

If someone receives rent subsidy, security deposits are an allowable housing cost under the revised DDS rent subsidy policy. In the new policy, the first payment an individual receives for rent subsidy will also include the first and last month's rent. The intention is that the last month's rent can be used as a security deposit. If there is a lot of damage or issues to an apartment when someone moves out, then the individual can work with PRAT to fund the last month's rent. Providers also receive a variety of incentives for participating in STEP, and some have used incentive funds to pay for security deposits as individuals move. As a case manager, work with the providers you are involved with to see if this is an option.

**2. Will Department of Housing, Rental Assistance Program (RAP) Certificates be available for the people transitioning out of a congregate setting into an apartment?**

Currently there are RAP vouchers available for individuals participating in Supportive Housing programs. For individuals in IHS generally, they may apply through the Department of Housing for Section 8 and RAP vouchers. Please note that there are waiting lists for both.

**3. Can families who are willing to provide some supports including housing for their child as well as other individuals do so?**

If this comes up in a planning meeting, DDS has developed guidelines to assist families in securing housing, rental agreements, and other issues related to purchasing a home for their child. The document is called [Related Party Ownership of Homes](#).

## Day and Employment Supports

**1. What does STEP mean for congregate day settings?**

STEP supports individuals to transition from non-vocational (non-employment) to prevocational (preparing for employment) and vocational (employment) supports to help individuals gain and keep meaningful employment. As some people change programs, it will make more space in the day programs for other people who need them. DDS does not intend to close non-employment Day Settings as part of STEP, and many individuals transitioning will continue to receive blended DSO supports with their vocational or employment supports.

**2. What does STEP mean for employment supports?**

STEP creates new opportunities for individuals to transition from Group Supported Employment (GSE), Employment Transitional Supports (ETS), and DSO (Day Support Options) to Individualized Supported Employment (ISE), Customized Employment (CE), and Individualized Day Vocational (IDV). Individuals in DSO may also transition to GSE and ETS. These transitions allow individuals to work in areas that best fit their personal goals. Individuals have the flexibility to maintain non-vocational supports in their non-working hours, and DDS continues to invest in community building opportunities.

**3. Will the number of hours for employment be comparable to the standard day program hours?**

Individuals that transition into new supports may work fewer hours, and therefore receive fewer support hours, than the number of hours they currently receive. DDS case managers are allowed to authorize individuals moving into an employment setting to be able to utilize their full Level of Need funding. This will provide individuals with the ability to use any excess funding not utilized for employment to help assist with other day activities if requested. Individuals transitioning through STEP may receive some non-vocational supports in addition to the new employment supports. The Employment and Day Services (EDS) team is considering piloting alternative DSO approaches to work with providers to create additional meaningful day options for these individuals.

## Transformation Plans

### 1. How will support teams create individualized transformation plans for individuals who require more intensive support needs or adaptive equipment?

All providers should assess the needs of individuals who are interested in moving out of congregate settings including those that may have more intensive medical, physical, or behavioral needs. Case managers and other members of the individuals' teams will work with providers to resolve issues that may restrict an individual from moving.

### 2. What criteria will DDS use to determine that the agencies seeking incentives can adequately provide the supports and services?

Regional teams, including representatives from case management and resource management, will thoroughly review all provider transformation plans. The teams are to ensure participants are willing and able to move into the designated settings with the appropriate health and safety oversight. All plans are reviewed equally. These teams may ask case managers not on the teams for their insights into the potential impact of a plan on individuals they support. DDS is committed to working with individuals, their families, and providers to support interested individuals to transition as part of STEP even if there are challenges.

### 3. What role do case managers play in creating provider STEP Plans?

Providers must complete STEP Plans for regional review and approval to participate in STEP. Case managers are not responsible for creating these plans but can assist. Providers must collect stakeholder input as part of planning. Case managers can provide input and feedback during this process. They might also support individuals to share their concerns or ideas with the provider. Case managers will then use the Individual Planning process following the submission of the STEP Plan, to ensure the team is involved and all is documented.

## Transportation

### 1. Transportation is a challenge across the state. How will providers address this for people who move?

Providers will create a STEP Plan as part of STEP. The plan template includes sections for providers to elaborate on how they will document the transition-related needs of the individual including transportation requirements prior to moving. Case managers can support this planning by making sure individuals understand their transportation needs and options. DDS understands that transportation is a challenge for many people who receive supports, and providers and case managers will need to work in tandem to create a person-centered transportation strategy.

### 2. Are there ways to use ride-share options to support individuals? How can Uber and Lyft be approved?

Uber and Lyft supports are an approved method of transportation under the Transportation waiver service. Case managers should review other transportation options before utilizing transportation network companies.



## Assistive Technology and Remote Supports

### **1. What role does assistive technology play in transitions?**

Assistive technology is one way an individual may be empowered to do more for themselves. Providers are encouraged to include appropriate assistive technology in their STEP Plans. Some will add it to congregate settings so individuals can get comfortable with it before moving to more independent settings. Case managers can support individuals to understand available options and how to access them.

### **2. What role do remote supports play in transitions?**

Remote supports are one way an individual can have staff support without having someone physically there with them. This makes it easier to provide staff when people are not in the same location. It also lets people have more independence and control over their own space. More providers will offer remote supports because of STEP. Case managers should explain remote supports in planning discussions with individuals.