



STEP Approved Provider Approaches

Connecticut Developmental Services

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Relevant Acronyms

Acronym	Definition
AT	Assistive Technology
BRS	Bureau of Rehabilitation Services
CE	Customized Employment
CES	Customized Employment Specialist
CLA	Community Living Arrangement
CRS	Continuous Residential Supports
DMHAS	Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services
DSO	Day Service Options
ECHO	Eastern Connecticut Housing Opportunities
ETS	Employment Transitional Services
GSE	Group Supported Employment
ID	Intellectual Disabilities
IDN	Individualized Day Nonvocational
IHS	Individualized Home Supports
IPS	Individual Placement and Support
ISE	Individual Supported Employment
LON	Level of Need
STEP	Supporting Transformation to Empower People

STEP is an incredible opportunity to empower the people we support through strategic investments in the DDS system.



Building on Charting the Life Course priorities, STEP emphasizes a **different way of thinking** that encourages **high expectations**, emphasizes life experiences that align with individuals' goals, and the integration of **multiple support types** to build independence.

Individuals and their Families

Work to develop a vision for their life and build skills and natural supports for lifelong independence according to their goals, interests, and strengths.

DDS

Develop an organizational approach that prioritizes person-centered processes and supports individuals to be independent and self-determined.

Providers

Create more support options for individuals that give them opportunities to connect their residential and working lives to their goals and needs.

About the Provider Plan Summaries

- Summaries highlight **planned provider approaches** that put individuals first
- These are **high-level summaries** of provider plans that have been approved by DDS
- Individuals noted in the slides have **already confirmed plans** to transition
- Summaries will be **updated regularly** as DDS approves new plans

Abilis Approved by agency on 12/19/23

*Abilis is working with two individuals who have successfully acquired competitive employment positions in the past but were **unable to retain these placements** and returned to their original DSO program. Both individuals continue to be interested in competitive employment, and Abilis will support them to build skills through STEP by **shifting to supports that work towards employment.***

Plan Highlights:

- BUILDING SKILLS FOR EMPLOYMENT**
Because these individuals have already been employed and had difficulties completing tasks, Abilis is working directly with them to identify areas for growth. The transitional program is slated for 12 months with training throughout, culminating in support to submit a job application and complete an interview. Abilis hopes that the individuals will have secured and been successful in a new role within the 12-month window with reduced support in ISE.
- PREVIOUS PROGRAM**
There is no impact to the DSO setting in Abilis's plan, as the identified individuals will be gradually reducing their hours over time. Ultimately the vacancies created by the STEP transitions will be filled individuals with similar LONS.
- TEAM ENGAGEMENT**
Abilis is taking an iterative approach to training where individuals' teams are kept informed on which modules have been completed throughout the process. Teams then have the opportunity to provide input into additional areas of trainings to address specific areas of need based on past challenges.

Individuals Transitioning:

Day/Employment: 2
Residential: N/A

Programs Involved: DSO, Project SEARCH, ISE

Restructuring Setting(s): No

Plan Summary (points to the main text block)

Key Data Points (points to the bottom section)

Plan Highlights (points to the numbered list)

For any related questions or comments, please email Gunnar.Abrahamsson@ct.gov

Abilis is working with two individuals who have successfully acquired competitive employment positions in the past but were **unable to retain these placements** and returned to their original DSO program. Both individuals continue to be interested in competitive employment, and Abilis will support them to build skills through STEP by **shifting to supports that work towards employment**.

Abilis has also worked with their region and DDS to **include a new residential portion** of their plan that will be transitioning three individuals from CLA and CRS settings to IHS supports.

Individuals Transitioning:

Day/Employment: 2

Residential: 3

Programs Involved: CLA, CRS, DSO, Project SEARCH, IHS, ISE

Restructuring Setting(s): No

Plan Highlights:

1

BUILDING SKILLS FOR EMPLOYMENT

Because these individuals have already been employed and had difficulties completing tasks, Abilis is working directly with them to identify areas for growth. The transitional program is slated for 12 months with training throughout, culminating in support to submit a job application and complete an interview. Abilis hopes that the individuals will have secured and been successful in a new role within the 12-month window with reduced support in ISE.

2

RESIDENTIAL TRANSITION PREP

During the transition process, Abilis will assist individuals in building skills and comfort in regulating their unsupervised time and managing their health and safety. Supports prior to the transition will generally focus on building independence and working on the confidence of the individual while ensuring they are prepared to live in the community. The individual will begin this process in their current CRS or CLA prior to transitioning.

3

TEAM ENGAGEMENT

Abilis is taking an iterative approach to training where individuals' teams are kept informed on which modules have been completed throughout the process. Teams then have the opportunity to provide input into additional areas of trainings to address specific areas of need based on past challenges.

Ability Beyond (AB)

*Ability Beyond is an employment first agency that aims to provide individuals that want to work in a competitive, integrated environment with the opportunity to do so. The agency is already providing CE supports and is **leveraging STEP funding to accelerate existing plans** to hire an additional **CE Specialist** who will provide an individualized approach to find valuable long-term employment. AB aims to support ten individuals to transition from a variety of programs including DSO, IDN, TES, and GSE to more individualized or employment-focused supports.*

Additionally, AB is working with one individual in their CLA residential supports to transition to IHS.

Individuals Transitioning:

Day/Employment: 10 (+8 potentially)

Residential: 1

Programs Involved: CLA, DSO, GSE, IDN/V, IHS, TES

Restructuring Setting(s): No

Plan Highlights:

Approved by agency on 11/28/23

1

EXPEDITED & INDIVIDUALIZED JOB PLACEMENT

AB will continue to provide traditional TES, and the additional CES will help expedite the skills acquisition needed for identified individuals to transition to CE or ISE. Individuals participating will replace some of their DSO hours with skills-building activities focused on finding and applying to a job or internship. The new CES will offer individual staffing support to each person transitioning creating a tailored experience for their needs.

2

COMMUNITY-BASED SUPPORTS

AB prides themselves on a community-based approach where they conduct most services in local community settings. The new CES will work with local business and other community organizations to identify opportunities for individuals to work in the communities they live in.

3

GRADUAL TRANSITIONS

Building on a successful model in the TES/DSO and CE programs, AB works with an individual's team and case manager to round out their budget/authorization to have a period of time (half a day, full day, two days) where they still receive DSO supports to address other therapeutic goals and needs during their transition. If a job schedule makes it difficult to provide these hours, AB will prioritize facilitating connections with peers outside of normal program hours for these opportunities to continue.

Plan Highlights:

The Arc Eastern Connecticut (ECT)

Three years ago, the Arc Eastern Connecticut began discussions with Eastern Connecticut Housing Opportunities (ECHO) to offer individuals that receive supports the opportunity to live the most independent life possible. They **created a supported apartment cluster** to support this goal, and work with individuals to maximize their engagement with natural supports and friends in their communities.

The Arc ECT's Employment Transition Center is implementing CE to support individuals to become more independent in their working lives. The agency **emphasizes informed choice** with opportunities to volunteer and work in jobs related to an individual's chosen career path prior to making final decisions.

Individuals Transitioning:

Day/Employment: 4

Residential: 3

Programs Involved: CE, CLA, DSO, GSE, TES

Restructuring Setting(s): No

1

JOB COACH

Each participant will have a job coach to assist them in all aspects of employment with customized training that may include resume creation and computer skills, mock interviews, workshops on self-presentation and proper job attire, dealing with co-workers and supervisors, and other relevant skills. Life skill training will also be provided, including sessions on how to utilize public transportation and adaptive AT solutions. This one-on-one coaching will be provided until the individual and each member of the team feels the person can be successful independently in the new support.

2

CLUSTERED IHS WITH AT

In advance of the opening of the newly developed apartment building and acceptance of leasing applications, an independent support team will be developed to plan what the apartment cluster will look like, to ensure that it is acceptable to prospective participants and their families/caregivers, and to recognize any additional needs each individual may have to be successful in this new living situation. The Arc of ECT was also approved to pilot an AT project in partnership with DDS, and each individual will receive a comprehensive assessment prior to transitioning. Their units will then be outfitted with the appropriate technology and supports.

3

COMMUNITY LIFE & ADVOCACY PROGRAM

Individuals in the cluster apartments will be able to participate in the agency's Community Life & Advocacy program which offers health/fitness, men's/women's support groups, self-advocacy meetings, cultural and educational outings, community activities, and volunteer opportunities throughout the area. Staff will also drive each person around the area to get to know their new community.

Plan Highlights:

The Arc of Farmington Valley (Favarh)

*Favarh identified three individuals who are interested in transitioning from **CLA supports to Clustered IHS supports**. Favarh was the first agency in Connecticut to begin providing clustered supports in 2007 at their Old Farms Crossing apartment complex, and they are leveraging their expertise as well as **assistive technology and remote supports** to make these transitions seamless and person-centered.*

*Favarh’s amended plan also includes supporting individuals to move from **Project SEARCH and GSE into ISE supports**. Favarh hopes to empower individuals to build new skills, find employment opportunities in their interest areas, and to foster greater independence and choice.*

Individuals Transitioning:

Day/Employment: Between 6-10

Residential: 3

Programs Involved: CLA, GSE, Project SEARCH, IHS, ISE

Restructuring Setting(s): Yes

1

CHOOSING NEW HOUSING

Favarh has a commitment from two separate developers to open apartments as they become available. Individuals transitioning to these apartments will be offered multiple opportunities to learn about their new community including recreational events to facilitate meeting and getting to know new community mates. Agency staff will assist individuals and/or their families in applying for any rent subsidies and SNAP benefits on a case-by-case basis.

2

JOB EXPLORATION

For individuals transitioning to ISE and Project SEARCH, Favarh will provide job coaching and exploration sessions to help them identify best-fit opportunities. These sessions will focus on individuals' goals, skills development, and interests. Favarh will work with individuals to match them with employers and independent employment opportunities.

3

RESTRUCTURING A CLA

Favarh has had high demand historically for the CLA individuals will be transitioning out of as part of STEP. Taking this opportunity with the newly created vacancies, Favarh is completing renovations to make the home more accessible including the addition of a second, more accessible bathroom as well as double staffing to support people with ambulation issues.

The Arc of Southington, Inc.

*The Arc of Southington has a mission of educating, empowering, supporting, and advocating for people with disabilities. They are working with three individuals in their **CLA residential supports to move to a transition home model** where individuals will gain the necessary skills to prepare to move into independent living (IHS and Clustered IHS) or supportive housing.*

Individuals Transitioning:

Day/Employment: N/A

Residential: 3

Programs Involved: CLA, IHS

Restructuring Setting(s): No

Plan Highlights:

Approved by agency on 11/27/23

1

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY TRAINING

The Arc of Southington will offer assistive technology training to teach staff how to foster and promote independence. Trained staff will complete an assessment for each individual transitioning to identify appropriate assistive technology solutions based on their goals and needs. This will include identifying technology solutions to promote safety in an independent environment. This training will be ongoing and will adapt as the needs of the individuals change. The Arc of Southington is looking to supplement STEP funds by applying for the open Notice of Opportunity regarding assistive technology for the transition home.

2

TRANSITION HOME

While living in the transition home, individuals will learn the necessary skills required to live more independently including learning how to use public transportation, managing their own finances, and completing household tasks such as cooking and cleaning.

3

HOLISTIC SUPPORTS

The Arc of Southington will provide holistic supports for individuals in the transition house. This will include behavioral supports, medical and dietary supports, Meals on Wheels, healthy cooking classes, cyber and community safety, travel training, and facilitating community connections. Additionally, all individuals will have access to counseling services.

ARI is leveraging STEP to enhance support for individuals transitioning to independent living by **prioritizing peer interactions, housing exploration, and collaboration with families** to address key concerns like transportation and accessibility. These efforts aim to create a smoother, more informed transition process that empowers individuals to confidently move into their new homes.

The agency also prioritizes **preparing individuals for competitive employment**. Staff organize skill-building activities and regularly schedule sessions with an Employment Specialist, which emphasize practical work experiences and insights. These **integrated efforts ensure individuals are continuously ready for more independent employment opportunities**.

Individuals Transitioning:

Day/Employment: 10

Residential: 2

Programs Involved: CLA, IHS, DSO, GSE, ISE

Restructuring Setting(s): Yes

Plan Highlights:

1

PEER SUPPORT AND HOUSING EXPLORATION

ARI will prioritize giving individuals the chance to speak with peers who have undergone similar transitions. This approach includes showing transition candidates various housing settings, meeting current tenants, and understanding living conditions firsthand. ARI will collaborate closely with families and support teams to identify suitable housing units, addressing concerns such as transportation, walkability, accessibility, and roommate compatibility.

2

JOB READINESS AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

ARI focuses on job readiness for all individuals. Staff develop curriculum, host discussion groups, and organize skills activities to prepare individuals for competitive employment. Weekly sessions led by an Employment Specialist cover work experiences and lessons learned. Additionally, a Peer Mentor with a disability provides one-on-one training to improve math, reading, and soft job skills. These training opportunities continue to support workforce preparation.

3

ENDING SUBMINIMUM WAGE

As part of their STEP Transformation Plan, ARI will eliminate subminimum wage in their GSE Program by December 31, 2024. The program will be restructured to offer all individuals competitive wages while maintaining the current support structure. Each participant will have personalized employment-related goals to achieve before their wages are increased to competitive levels, emphasizing the importance of performance in competitive employment.

CCARC is opening a new **Supportive Housing program to expand their IHS supports** and will support five individuals to transition into that setting as part of STEP. CCARC has taken great care to inform individuals, their families, and their support networks about the details of these supports and the changes they can expect in transitioning. The use of **both assistive technology and remote supports will improve the transition experience and enhance individuals' abilities to live independently.**

Individuals Transitioning:

Day/Employment: N/A

Residential: 5 (7 additional from other programs)

Programs Involved: CLA, IHS

Restructuring Setting(s): Yes

Plan Highlights:

1

NEW ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

CCARC hired an Assistant Director to work with both the Supportive Housing property manager and DDS to implement policies and procedures, marketing and applicant review/transition, and staff recruitment and training. This person will become certified in AT Assessments. One of their primary responsibilities is to work with individuals and families and support them through transitions. As part of this process, they will identify the need for additional DSP support as CCARC navigates the implementation.

2

FAMILY FORUMS AND ENGAGEMENT

CCARC hosted Family Forums focused on educating families and individuals about STEP, the featured Supportive Housing project, and other individualized services the agency is now providing like Project SEARCH and Customized Employment. In addition, after these presentations, CCARC met with each team to answer questions and determine interest, fears, and barriers, and worked to find solutions to address them.

3

REMOTE SUPPORTS TRANSITION TRAINING

CCARC received funding from DDS to implement remote supports technology in their new Supportive Housing setting. As part of their plan, individuals still in the CLA will have the opportunity to practice using this technology to promote success and comfort upon transitioning to the new support.

Community Residences, Inc. (CRI)

*CRI's focus with STEP is to help individuals transition from CLA settings to Clustered IHS supports that the agency is in the process of developing. **Clustered IHS will be a new support for CRI** and the agency is looking forward to implementing this model that includes assistive technology and remote supports options, as well as a planned drop-in center to assist individuals in building natural supports.*

*The individuals planning to move have already expressed interest in a change and are excited to participate. Due to some of the complex behavioral needs of these individuals, CRI has **identified person-centered risk mitigation strategies.***

Individuals Transitioning:

Day/Employment: N/A

Residential: 3

Programs Involved: CLA, IHS

Restructuring Setting(s): No

Plan Highlights:

Approved by agency on 10/25/23

1

SCHEDULING TOURS AND "MEET AND GREETs"

CRI works with the individual and their team to prepare for the transition through visits, tours, and transition planning sessions. Individuals will choose their own roommates and can choose to meet them in advance to see if they are a good fit. "Meet and greets" have been conducted so that people can meet others in the program and develop natural support networks in the community.

2

CLUSTERED SUPPORTS WITH DROP-IN CENTER

As CRI sets up Clustered IHS supports, there is a long-term plan to have a drop-in center in the building to provide regular social and instructional activities to residents. The drop-in center in the building, once available, will help support socialization and minimize isolation. Group activities and social opportunities will be readily available using existing common areas and a small office as well.

3

TRANSITION SAFEGUARDS

CRI is leveraging flexible staffing and assistive technology (assessments and installation) to help individuals transition smoothly. 24-hour on call support will be available to individuals and their families for emergency situations. Additionally, in the clustered support model, more staff time can be allocated to direct service and daily check-ins during the transition. Plans will be developed that include daily check-ins at first and more, if necessary, that will be evaluated and phased out as the individual becomes more comfortable in the new environment.

Dungarvin

*Dungarvin is taking advantage of STEP funding to push forward **agency priorities that have been planned for years**. This STEP Transformation Plan focuses on supporting individuals who are interested in more independent living situations to transition from CRS supports to IHS supports.*

*While Dungarvin is not yet certified to provide Remote Supports and IHS, the agency has the necessary credentials and is **working with DDS to facilitate this process**. Overall, Dungarvin is planning for an 18-month timeline to complete transitions into new independent living supports.*

Individuals Transitioning:

Day/Employment: N/A

Residential: 16

Programs Involved: CRS, IHS

Restructuring Setting(s): No

Plan Highlights:

Approved by agency on 10/25/23

1

IHS MANAGERS

Dungarvin is planning to hire three additional IHS managers to support service delivery in the new settings. The agency has found that in the past, for significant additions of IHS hours provided, a manager level position is necessary for supervision, quality and scheduling. These managers will be brought on board as transitions are starting to help manage this process and will have hours of direct care built into their schedules.

2

PERSON-CENTERED HOUSING SELECTION

Dungarvin emphasizes person-centered planning in selecting the specific housing supports for individuals that are transitioning. Most individuals have noted that they prefer to be in their own apartment alone or with a roommate, and Dungarvin will leverage their new IHS managers as well as a Development Coordinator to work directly with them to identify and secure housing options that align with their preferences and goals. To facilitate timely transitions, Dungarvin will cover security deposits in new settings.

3

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY AND TRIALS

Dungarvin has designed assessment tools to gauge each individual and their support team's areas of concern, particularly to capture areas where technology may be beneficial. To promote health and safety in new settings, the agency is using both passive and active remote technology like door and window sensors, kitchen safety tools, AI-based reminders, and other solutions. To get individuals familiar with some of these tools, Dungarvin plans to create a test kitchen and living area where individuals can learn and use devices prior to deciding which options they wish to utilize in their new setting.

The Kennedy Collective

As part of STEP, the Kennedy Collective is **transforming their subminimum wage GSE program into an ISE program with competitive wages.** Their goal is to support individuals in their program to strive for **financial independence.** This includes augmenting staff to provide opportunities for **job development and career planning** throughout the transition period. By providing opportunities for greater independence, the Kennedy Collective hopes to support individuals to learn and enhance self-advocacy skills, independent living skills, financial literacy, and how to utilize natural supports.

Individuals Transitioning:

Day/Employment: 41

Residential: N/A

Programs Involved: GSE, IDV, ISE

Restructuring Setting(s): Yes

Approved by agency on 2/26/2024

Plan Highlights:

1

TRANSPORTATION SUPPORT

The Kennedy Collective will provide each individual participating in STEP with mobility services and travel training to assist them in accessing their communities and their competitive, community-based employment. For individuals without access to public transportation, The Kennedy Collective will work with them to identify alternatives such as rideshare or taxi services.

2

CAREER ADVANCEMENT SPECIALISTS

The Kennedy Collective is utilizing STEP incentives to support career planning and job development for individuals, and to provide intensive supports and working interviews for individuals transitioning out of GSE or IDV and into ISE. Career Advancement Specialists put these activities into practice and use person-centered planning to work with each individual to identify their desires and strengths.

3

INTENSIVE ONBOARDING

As individuals secure competitive employment, The Kennedy Collective will use STEP funds to provide additional hours of job coaching as part of intensive onboarding services onsite. If individuals have specific training needs beyond the additional coaching hours, the agency will request one-time intensive supports as needed.

Kuhn Employment Opportunities, Inc.

*In 2022, Kuhn became one of the first agencies to complete and begin providing CE services for individuals referred by DDS and BRS. As part of STEP, Kuhn plans to build on this progress to **transition interested individuals from GSE supports to ISE or CE**. This will further Kuhn's efforts to assist individuals to work in the least restrictive and most integrated employment setting.*

*The agency's **VIP** mission strives to make sure individuals are **Valued** in their communities, **Independent** as a result of earned income, and **Proud** of their work and contributions to their community.*

Individuals Transitioning:

Day/Employment: 10

Residential: N/A

Programs Involved: CE, GSE, ISE

Restructuring Setting(s): No

Plan Highlights:

Approved by agency on 11/27/23

1

EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES

Kuhn staff utilize evidence-based practices from the IPS model adopted by DMHAS and modify them as needed for the ID population. Standards set forth in the IPS model are beneficial for successful job placement outcomes while matching individuals' interests with employer needs, and Kuhn plans to leverage this model to support STEP transitions.

2

REGULAR PROGRAMMING: WEEKLY, MONTHLY AND QUARTERLY

To help GSE participants feel comfortable making this transition, Kuhn will provide weekly educational programming with a focus on independent employment. A monthly Employment Support Group will provide peer support in addition to staff support for those working and/or looking to obtain competitive employment. Additionally, Quarterly Family Nights will be held. These are designed to educate families on Kuhn's programs aimed at helping participants find independent work with an emphasis on overcoming perceived barriers to employment.

3

NEW JOB COACH

The addition of a job coach will support individuals in need of intensive job coaching as they start new jobs. This coach will also make workplace visits to current ISE participants. Bringing in this new member of the staff will allow Employment Specialists to maximize the amount of time they spend assisting participants in the job search process.

The Light House (LH)

*The Light House has developed an **extensive Adult Services Transformation plan spanning 3 campuses**, with several individuals identified as potential candidates to change settings. The primary goal is to conduct a well-planned transition for individuals from congregate day settings to more individualized, community-focused supports with buy-in from the individual and their family. This transformation is focused on **improving independence and choice** for people receiving supports.*

*The Light House does not currently provide either CE or ISE supports but is qualified to provide both services and **will begin these programs** as part of this transformation.*

Individuals Transitioning:

Day/Employment: 5

Residential: N/A

Programs Involved: DSO, ETS, IDV, ISE

Restructuring Setting(s): Yes

Plan Highlights:

Approved by agency on 4/23/24

1

INDIVIDUALIZED PATHS TO EMPLOYMENT

For individuals transitioning from DSO to ETS, LH will conduct several assessments to ensure they are able to meet the benchmarks for competitive employment. If qualified, LH will arrange a tour of internships placements along with participation in a staff facilitated group activity to gauge compatibility. If the individual is interested in competitive employment, but does not meet the benchmarks for ETS, they can transition to CE or IDV. For individuals transitioning from a full DSO to CE/DSO combination, LH will work with the team to identify a plan, assign CE staff, and balance CE/DSO hours as needed. For individuals transitioning from ETS to IDV/ISE, Employment Specialists will conduct ongoing assessments to determine readiness for competitive employment.

2

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF EMPLOYMENT

As part of STEP, LH is creating a new position for an Associated Director of Employment. This individual will be responsible for overseeing provision of IDV, ISE, and CE, with the development and coordination of community and site-based volunteerism, internal staff development and training, collaborating on the IP process with individuals and their teams, and implementing proprietary curricula and assessments to aid decision making.

3

TEAM ENGAGEMENT

Once an individual is identified as a transition candidate, LH hosts info sessions with their whole team focused on explaining program offerings and sharing available pathways to employment. These sessions will feature first-hand input from current program participants, along with data and insights collected by LH to support informed decisions.

MARC Community Resources

MARC Community Resources is undergoing a transformation of their Day and Employment program by adding a **new blended Vocational Development service**. In addition to this service, the agency is continuing to **expand their participation in Project SEARCH** and is undergoing administrative and staffing transformations to more effectively provide services. MARC also seeks to **serve more individuals with complex needs**.

Individuals Transitioning:

Day/Employment: 20

Residential: N/A

Programs Involved: DSO (and medically acute DSO), ETS, GSE, Project SEARCH

Restructuring Setting(s): Yes

Plan Highlights:

Approved by agency on 1/20/24

1

VOCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

As part of STEP, MARC will create a program for individuals who receive both GSE and DSO services called "Vocational Development." This program blends DSO and GSE services and will be community-based at least 70% of the time. Its focus is on vocational training, access to volunteer sites, and meaningful community experiences with an emphasis on employment opportunities. MARC intends to support individuals to increase GSE hours in the same setting and increase hours in the community.

2

STEP TRANSFORMATION OVERSIGHT

MARC will create a subcommittee to review their STEP plan at least quarterly to ensure they are efficiently identifying individuals to participate. The subcommittee will be comprised of the CEO, COO, and Directors and Managers who oversee staff supporting individuals currently planning to participate in the plan. Sessions will focus on the overall status of the individuals transitioning, new individuals that will participate, and potential candidates for transition.

3

MARC BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

MARC re-instituted this long-standing committee designed to connect with local businesses to provide employment opportunities for individuals and to acknowledge their contributions. The Business Development Council is working to connect with businesses to educate them on MARC's programs and to explore relationships can be mutually beneficial. The agency believes this committee will help establish contracted work sites and internship opportunities, including additional Project SEARCH sites.

MARC, Inc. (Manchester)

Plan Highlights:

Approved by agency on 11/1/23

MARC's plan involves working with individuals in both GSE and Transitional Supports to transition to **competitive employment opportunities**. MARC is focused on developing a hybrid, 4-month program like Project SEARCH to provide internship experience for the individuals transitioning. As part of this transformation, MARC is hoping to stand up and implement **a classroom-based employment readiness program** that will continue into the future.

Individuals Transitioning:

Day/Employment: 19

Residential: N/A

Programs Involved: GSE, Transitional Supports

Restructuring Setting(s): Yes

1

ENDING A SUBMINIMUM WAGE ARRANGEMENT

As part of their STEP Transformation Plan, MARC, Inc. will be ending a subminimum wage arrangement in the setting individuals are transitioning out of (GSE program). For the individuals currently in this setting, MARC will be working with those interested to identify opportunities for competitive employment. Long-term, this setting will be used to provide enhanced vocational training services to help individuals push towards competitive employment.

2

VOCATIONAL ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM (ACCELERATED)

The program will be a four-month transition, with additional hours as needed. MARC will work on a small-scale ratio, with four individuals for each rotation. They anticipate three rotations each year, about ten hours of classroom time and seventeen to twenty hours of employment-based, hands-on work skills per week. The classroom life skills training will consist of community safety skills, financial and budgeting practices, workplace practices/rules, hygiene and appropriate attire, transportation, and interview skills.

3

ADDITIONAL JOB DEVELOPER

MARC, Inc. is hiring a dedicated job developer for this transition program. The job developer will be responsible for finding host sites and instructing the classroom portion of this program. MARC, Inc. will also utilize a consultant to develop a classroom curriculum that can be used from rotation to rotation.

Marrakech

*Marrakech is implementing a transformation effort involving multiple residential and day transitions spanning several programs. The agency's transformation relies on the **development of a STEP Team** to identify, educate, and transition individuals from congregate residential and vocational settings into individualized integrated community settings of their choosing. Individuals that take part in a transition with Marrakech will work with a STEP Team in addition to their traditional support teams to navigate the transition. Additionally, this team will serve beyond STEP as a **resource to individuals and their families waiting to begin DDS supports** who are interested in learning about alternative options for living independently.*

Individuals Transitioning:

Day/Employment: 16

Residential: 15

Programs Involved: CLA, CRS, DSO, GSE, IDV, IHS

Restructuring Setting(s): Yes

Plan Highlights:

1

ADDRESSING COMMON CONCERNS

To clarify the purpose and function of the proposed STEP Team(s), Marrakech identified common transition barriers and challenges experienced by both case managers and families. These obstacles were outlined in their STEP proposal, along with a description of how the STEP Team would address them to ensure successful transitions.

2

TRANSITION PREP FOR INDIVIDUALS

The proposed STEP Team will work with each individual and their support teams to provide guided training related to familiarizing them with their new environment and setting. This support includes neighborhood tours featuring essential resources in the community (grocery stores, public transport) as well as identification of important routines and norms for the home (trash days, reporting emergencies, appliance tutorials).

3

ENGAGEMENT WITH INDIVIDUALS PRIOR TO SUPPORT

Marrakech is using STEP as an opportunity to change the way the agency engages with and involves individuals and their families who are waiting for DDS placement. This includes consultations with support teams to identify alternatives to CLAs and connecting families with existing community-based resources.

MidState Arc

MidState is in the midst of transforming their Residential and Day programs. On the Residential side, they are developing a **new transitional CLA** to facilitate transitions to IHS settings for interested individuals within two years. In this setting they will be using assistive technology, remote supports, and direct supports focused on preparing individuals for independent living.

In addition, MidState is facilitating transitions for **individuals participating in DSO and GSE** day settings to ISE, IDS, or GSE supports, depending on the individual.

Individuals Transitioning:

Day/Employment: 25

Residential: 3

Programs Involved: CLA, DSO, GSE, IDV, IHS, ISE

Restructuring Setting(s): Yes, Day settings

Plan Highlights:

Approved by agency on 10/27/23

1

TRANSITION HOUSE

MidState's Transition House will have five efficiency apartments, and support individuals to develop skills and familiarity with tools like assistive technology to prepare for independent living. This Transition House functions as a CLA, with the final step being to move individuals to IHS settings. In the center of the apartments will be a private working station where staff will be monitoring the assistive technology remotely and be available on-site to directly meet the needs of the people living there. Staff will have access to all apartments and offer support as needed throughout the day.

2

SUPPORT FOR RESIDENTIAL TRANSITIONS

Many services will be provided as part of the transition including self medication assessment and training, trials on the use of assistive technology and remote monitoring, travel training, healthy cooking classes, community connections, stranger danger, and cyber security. The length of time to the transitional supports will be based on the person and the team. Full team involvement with the creation and implementation of the independent living plan will be utilized to identify any additional services and supports needed.

3

SUPPORT FOR DAY TRANSITIONS

MidState is working to secure an on-call number that will allow staff to be accessed outside of normal working hours to answer transition-related questions. Additionally, MidState has started a social skills group that offers peer-to-peer support for individuals as they transition to new settings.

Opportunity Works Connecticut (OWC)

*OWC is undergoing a large Day/Employment transition focused on supporting individuals to move from **traditional day supports into the agency's transitional program**, as well as individuals already in the transitional program to GSE, IDV, and ISE supports. This is not OWC's first transformation effort in the Day and Employment space, and they are leveraging best practices around **proactive communication with support teams** and identifying transition risks and barriers along with mitigation strategies.*

Individuals Transitioning:

Day/Employment: 45

Residential: N/A

Programs Involved: DSO, GSE, TES

Restructuring Setting(s): No

Plan Highlights:

1

TRANSITIONAL PROGRAM

The Transitional program's primary focus is to provide exposure to the different types of work available in the community, with a secondary emphasis on training needs for successful employment. OWC established a classroom schedule with curriculum in areas that include resume writing, money skills, workplace behavior and expectations, time management, and communication. Training is also available for the specific tasks individuals perform at their jobs. Days are structured such that when individuals go into the community there is dedicated preparation or "preview" time and a wrap-up upon their return.

2

ENHANCED STAFFING

OWC is bringing on a Community Liaison and a Job Developer to support this effort, first in a part-time capacity and eventually full-time once they receive incentives and the program starts moving. These roles will be community-facing, connecting with businesses to educate them about OWC's programs, seeking opportunities for participants, and identifying resources to address the challenge of getting jobs.

3

PATHWAY TO EMPLOYMENT GUIDEBOOK

OWC created a guidebook, "Pathway to Employment," that specifies the general process for obtaining individualized competitive work in the community. This tool has been effective with transition candidates and their families to explain the process and create an overall timeline for the program. If an individual is not interested in or able to find the right employment, OWC will meet them where they are and help them continue down an alternate employment-focused path.

STAR, Inc.'s STEP Transformation Plan is focused on supporting individuals to transition from congregate day supports to more employment-focused opportunities, **anticipating around 20 hours per week of competitive employment** through CE and ISE supports. For many participants, these new hours of employment supports will be blended with DSO programming.

The agency's efforts are already in motion as **individuals have self-identified** as being interested in either partial or complete transitions.

Individuals Transitioning:

Day/Employment: 10

Residential: N/A

Programs Involved: CE, DSO, ISE

Restructuring Setting(s): No

Plan Highlights:

1

HIRING AND STAFF

To support the transition process, STAR will hire two job developers and five job coaches to work with individuals. Through STEP incentives, the agency is hoping to offer more competitive compensation to attract talent. In addition, STAR will prioritize training these new employees in CE services.

2

GRADUAL TRANSITIONS

STAR plans to utilize a discovery period in which the individual obtains employment, and then job coaching supports that decrease over time as individuals become comfortable in their role. Since many individuals transitioning will need support beyond their jobs, they will have the option to continue to receive DSO supports in their non-employment hours. In addition, STAR will continue to offer programming for former DSO participants to connect and continue to build natural support networks. Because additional DSO hours will be available due to transitions, STAR will place individuals on their waiting list into popular community-based classes.

3

CLEAR COMMUNICATION

To stay connected throughout the transition process, STAR is leveraging the existing interdisciplinary team (IDT) process in addition to informal conversations. Part of these conversations will be identifying individual preferences like seasonal work, vacation schedules, access to transportation, and AT needs. STAR Program coordinators will be the primary contact for individuals and their families to liaise with job developers and coaches.

United Cerebral Palsy of Eastern Connecticut, Inc.

*UCP offers programs for people with disabilities to help them develop employment skills, find accessible housing, and access assistive technology. The agency has identified four individuals who are interested in shifting from traditional **Day Supports to Transitional Supports** that work towards competitive employment.*

*UCP will leverage **Project SEARCH** as a means of placing individuals in internships and eventually jobs that match their goals. Their approach is person-centered to prioritize the physical and emotional wellbeing of individuals transitioning.*

Individuals Transitioning:

Day/Employment: 3

Residential: N/A

Programs Involved: DSO

Restructuring Setting(s): Yes

Plan Highlights:

Approved by agency on 10/27/23

1

COMPREHENSIVE OUTREACH

To identify individuals to participate in STEP, UCP shared messaging with supported individuals and their teams through email, paper communications, and telephone calls. Individuals who expressed interest then discussed the transition process in a team meeting before moving forward.

2

PERSON-CENTERED RISK MITIGATION

UCP is thinking proactively about potential obstacles to transition, including changing preferences, health challenges, and access to public transportation. The agency will provide travel training and emotional support services among other supports to facilitate the transitions. UCP hopes that this person-centered approach will result in more successful and long-lasting transitions.

3

INFORMED CHOICE

Individuals provided input into their plan by indicating whether they were interested in participating, developing their timeline for transitioning from the DSO, and asking questions about the transition program to make an informed choice. Individuals were provided the opportunity to learn about the Transition Program curriculum and community internship sites and were able to observe specific activities in the Transition program. Individuals also met and talked about the Transition program with peers and coaches in that program.

Vinfen

*Vinfen is leveraging STEP to support transitions from congregate residential settings into **IHS, including both apartments and a Supportive Housing project**. The Supportive Housing project includes 24/7 staffing availability for the individuals along with individualized plans for staffing. Vinfen **appointed a program director** to manage the staffing process and to implement the plan in general.*

Vinfen is invested in making sure that transitions are informed, and that individuals and their support teams feel comfortable prior to transitioning.

Individuals Transitioning:

Day/Employment: N/A

Residential: 9

Programs Involved: CLA, CRS, IHS

Restructuring Setting(s): Yes

Plan Highlights:

Approved by agency on 2/28/2024

1

PEER MENTORSHIP SUPPORT

An individual receiving supports from Vinfen who lives in his own apartment has volunteered to share his experiences with transition candidates. He will focus on highlighting challenges to expect and how to overcome them, and what he considers the “perks” of independent living. The individual will provide this support via peer mentorship and will make visits to the apartments.

2

TRANSITION SAFEGUARDS

In the Supportive Housing setting, Vinfen will have 24/7 staff that occupants can access when they have questions or need extra support. Staff will be shared for all individuals and will report to the agency within 15 minutes of receiving a request. In addition, Vinfen will have a program manager available between 9am-5pm, Monday through Friday. In the individual IHS programs, there will be on-call support and technology available to individuals to help them acclimate to the new setting. These safeguards supplement ongoing team meetings to identify interest areas and priorities for the individuals.

3

PREPARATION FOR HIGH-NEED INDIVIDUALS

Some individuals identified in Vinfen’s plan have higher support needs. These individuals expressed interest in IHS and Vinfen is providing enhanced opportunities to prepare for a potential transition over the coming months. Preparation activities would include skills building, education and training, and potential tapering of staff hours as they progress.