



DDS STEP (Supporting Transformation to Empower People) Plan

Connecticut Department of Developmental Services

MAY 2023

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What is STEP?

STEP **highlights and promotes the supports DDS offers** that provide greater choice, independence, integration, and empowerment.

STEP is at the **heart of DDS**, representing the DDS mission and paving the way to a better future for individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities (I/DD) in Connecticut.

STEP's Core Supports:

1. Community Companion Home (CCH)
2. Supportive Housing
3. Individualized Home Support (IHS)
4. Assistive Technology
5. Remote Supports
6. Employment
7. Self-Direction



Looking Ahead

DDS will leverage STEP to continue building a strong foundation as a national leader for services and supports for individuals with I/DD.

We need **YOUR** participation to promote independence in the lives of the people DDS supports!

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.



Empower people who receive supports to live more independently!



Supporting Transformation to Empower People

People are the Center of STEP

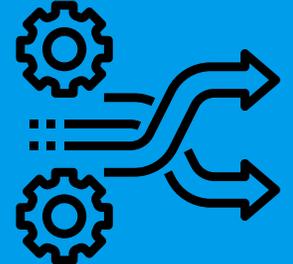
Ensuring that all efforts are person-centered and focused on supporting individuals to meet their goals is key to STEP's success.

Encourage **creativity and individualization** in providing supports that expand the **range of options!**




Mitigate **barriers** to transformation and **strengthen the DDS system!**

Investment at All Levels: Individual, Provider, Regional, and Departmental
STEP provides funding to support individuals to live and work in more independent, community-based settings.

Empowering People & Investing in DDS
This funding can accelerate transformation that is already happening, make new transformations more feasible, and better support providers to make these shifts.



DDS will leverage this opportunity to present individuals who receive supports with resources to set goals and plan their futures in a way that is aligned to their needs and goals. **We need YOUR participation to promote independence in the lives of the people DDS supports!**

DDS identified the STEP Plan based on input received from stakeholders and research efforts

What is the purpose of STEP?

STEP supports interested individuals to move from congregate settings to more individualized, community-based supports including:

1. Transitioning from a Community Living Arrangement (CLA) or Continuous Residential Supports (CRS) to **IHS, Supportive Housing, and CCH**
2. Transitioning from non-vocational congregate day settings to **prevocational and vocational supports**
3. Transitioning from Group Supported Employment (GSE) to **Individual Supported Employment (ISE) or Customized Employment (CE)**

To achieve this aim, DDS identified a series of Outcomes supported by Goals and Action Steps that will transform the current system and facilitate these transitions.



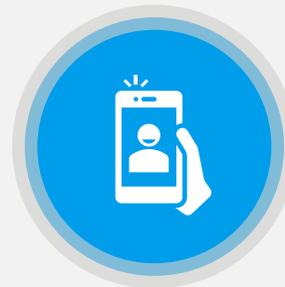
Individuals and families considering transitions have the outreach and support they need to make informed decisions



Providers have the resources and relationships to connect individuals to diverse employment options



Providers are financially and strategically supported to be creative in transformation efforts



Individuals have more access to assistive technology (AT) and remote supports



Individuals have increased opportunities to strengthen existing and develop new community connections

The design of STEP was informed by research and stakeholder feedback from a variety of sources

STEP has been an ongoing conversation between DDS, providers, individuals and families, and DDS staff.

Current State Assessment

DDS conducted an assessment of **five states** and **Connecticut** to identify promising practices for HCBS transformation efforts. The insights from this report informed the recommended approaches for STEP that DDS shared with various stakeholder groups for feedback.



Connecticut DDS
Moving On Program
Current State Review
January 31, 2023

DDS
Deloitte

Deloitte **DDS**

2.3 Arkansas
IDD Waivers
Arkansas utilizes one Medicaid 1915(d) waiver explicitly for IDD services called the AR Community and Employment Support (CES) waiver (0188.R06.00). Its stated purpose is to support individuals with autism and IDD to live in the community and prevent institutionalization. This waiver provides respite, supported employment, supportive living, specialized medical supplies, adaptive equipment, community transition services, consultation, environmental modifications, and supplemental support services for individuals with autism or IDD of all ages.

Of note, the CES waiver aims to support beneficiaries with major life activities, particularly competitive, integrated employment, and it includes comprehensive care coordination services. One of the waiver's primary objectives is "to transition eligible persons who choose the CES Waiver option from residential facilities to the community."

Arkansas served 5,200 individuals under a previous version of the waiver but had a large waitlist of individuals requesting services. In response, Arkansas committed \$40 million to eliminate the waitlist for IDD waiver services by June 2025. As part of this process, Arkansas' Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (AR DDS) added parents and legal guardians as allowable providers in self-direction of services to reduce workforce capacity concerns. Under the CES waiver approved in May 2022, slots for 3,200 individuals will be added over a three-year period. Arkansas expects lower costs for new entrants due to managed care savings.

The Arkansas Health and Opportunity for Me (ARHOME) waiver is a Medicaid section 1115 demonstration. It is not IDD specific. In November 2022, CMS approved an amendment to pilot innovative approaches to address housing and food insecurity, as well as other health-related social needs. According to a CMS press release, the key activities in the approved amendment relate to providing "medically necessary housing and nutrition support services" to waiver beneficiaries. Although ARPA funds cannot be used for room and board, this represents an important policy development to consider for long-term sustainability of programs.

ARPA Efforts & Spend Plans
Arkansas allocated enhanced Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) ARPA funding for HCBS to the following:

- Workforce retention: \$112 million
- Enabling technology: \$12 million
- Expanding and enhancing HCBS services: \$27 million

The ARPA workforce retention efforts allow Arkansas providers to apply for funds to offer incentives for hiring and retaining staff able to provide complex care to help reduce turnover and improve continuity of care. The state's enabling technology efforts aim to provide better access to HCBS services to promote improved independence and self-determination. As part of the initiative, Arkansas will provide funding for "client consultation, training, and capacity building" to support providers and Medicaid beneficiaries.

Arkansas's priorities for expanding and enhancing HCBS services mirror Connecticut's. For example, the Arkansas HCBS Spend plan notes that the state aims to "design a process to streamline faster access to HCBS services when a client is discharging from a more restrictive setting." While there are limited

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Stakeholder Input Sessions

DDS held six **Stakeholder Input Sessions** where participants **provided feedback** on a series of scenarios and models based on findings from the Current State Assessment.

Where are we going?

PAST	PRESENT	FUTURE
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Group employment and day programs without many choicesNot working or only working with other people with disabilitiesOften paid less than other workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Employment and day programs with choicesWorking in a group of people with disabilitiesSometimes paid less than other workers, sometimes paid the same	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Employment options beyond people's current abilitiesMore jobs in the communityMore people working

If you want one, is it **hard** to get a job?

What **helps** you get a job?

The design of STEP was informed by research and stakeholder feedback from a variety of sources

STEP has been an ongoing conversation between DDS, providers, individuals and families, and DDS staff.

Stakeholder Surveys

DDS disseminated surveys to collect additional feedback from individuals and families, providers, and DDS staff to **supplement the Stakeholder Input Session findings**. This effort allowed DDS to reach a larger group of stakeholders in each category and spread awareness about STEP.

2022 DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES SURVEY

1. The Connecticut Department of Developmental Services (DDS) is creating a Moving On plan for people to live and work more independently with the support they need.
Have you heard or read anything previously about the Moving On plan?
 Yes (ANSWER QUESTION 1a and 1b) No (SKIP TO QUESTION 2)

1a. How much have you read or heard about the DDS Moving On plan?
 A Lot Some Just a Little

1b. Where did you hear of the DDS Moving On plan? _____

2. How do you feel about the Moving On plan providing more technologies and supports to people supported by DDS?
Like very much Like a little Dislike a little Dislike very much Not sure

3. What is the main reason you like or dislike the Moving On plan? _____

4. How much do you think you could benefit from DDS supports and technologies that help you to live, learn and work on your own?
A Lot Some Not too much Not at all Not sure

5. Below is a list of statements. In thinking about the Moving On plan, please tell us how much you agree or disagree with each statement (PLEASE CHECK ONE FOR EACH LINE)

	Strongly Agree	Agree a little	Disagree a little	Strongly Disagree	Not Sure
Greatest chance for me to be more independent	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Concerned that this may be bad for me	<input type="checkbox"/>				

6. The goal of the Moving On plan is to allow you to be more independent in your living, learning or work. How much do you think this would change your life?
Greatly Improve Improve a little Worsen a little Greatly Worsen Not sure TURN OVER

Stakeholder Input Survey: Draft Survey Questions - Providers

Providers
The purpose of this survey is to collect feedback from DDS qualified providers in Connecticut about the DDS Moving On Initiative. In line with the DDS mission to enable individuals to live, learn, and work in more independent settings with appropriate levels of support, the Moving On Program is partnering with providers to encourage the expansion of more independent, non-congregate residential and day options. Please take a couple minutes to complete this survey—your responses are very important to make this initiative a success!
Please contact cmovingon-support@deloitte.com with any questions or concerns.

1. What type of supports do you provide?
a. Day Supports
b. Residential Supports
c. Both
d. Other (free text)
i. Please describe which "Other" supports you provide.

2. Through the Moving On Program, what tools would be most helpful to you in navigating the transition process for congregate residential and/or for congregate day settings? (rank these choices highest to lowest)
a. Direct updates from your region about the status of Moving On and potential changes in current support options
b. DDS trainings on alternative service options in the state
c. FAQ or toolkit you can use to help answer questions from individuals and families
d. Promotional materials or newsletter that describes new offerings or service approaches
e. Standardized scorecard you can use to measure progress on transitions for individuals to more independent settings
f. Peer learning group to share lessons learned, challenges, best practices from other providers (region-level or statewide)
g. Statewide presentations in the Leadership Forum or the Commissioner's Statewide Provider meeting

3. What is the biggest concern you have about the DDS Moving On Initiative? (pick up to 3)
a. Identifying individuals interested in participating
b. Educating and training staff about the initiative and its goals
c. Staff capacity to implement and sustain changes (e.g., workflow, service delivery, etc.)
d. Communicating with individuals and families about the changes and ensuring that the planning process meets their needs and preferences
e. Financial resources needed to successfully implement and sustain transitions

1

Communication strategy for consideration

DDS could implement a STEP Champion Network and equip all Champions with structure and materials to support STEP activities. The STEP Champion Network would leverage existing networks like the Arcs, the Alliance, and case manager supervisors.

Purpose | The STEP Champions will be the eyes, ears, and voice to and from staff and other stakeholders to support the success of STEP

- Informs and educates stakeholders on STEP using the voice of influential leaders in their departments/roles
- Delivers the “What’s in it for Me?” message on behalf of the STEP team
- Creates pathways for information sharing between different kinds of stakeholders and the STEP team



Benefits | Allows STEP to reach individuals, families, providers, and case managers through trusted leaders

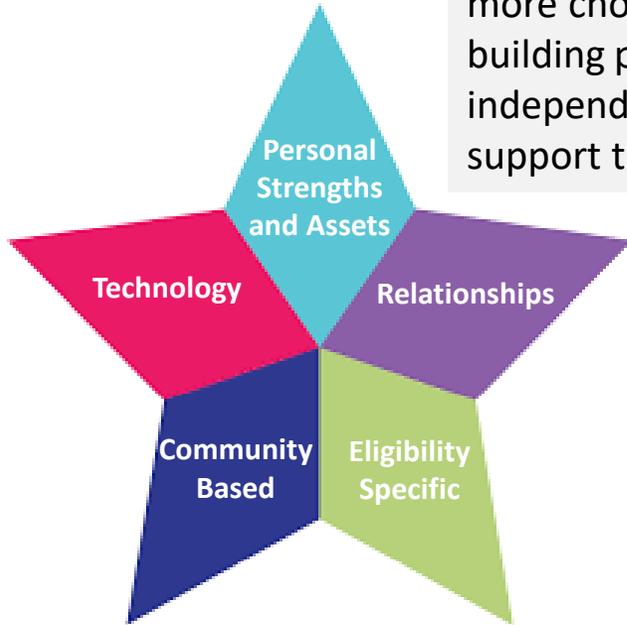
- Delivers targeted messages deeper into the organization and externally
- Provides quicker visibility to stakeholder concerns and points of view
- Curtails rumors and speculation through consistent engagement
- Creates a representative sub-set to share and receive information
- Accelerates implementation of the DDS STEP Plan



STEP builds towards change with specific activities

STEP is an approach to making thoughtful change so that efforts can be simplified, understood, and successful. This framework illustrates how DDS is on a trajectory for change, as the agency supports individuals in defining their own life trajectories.

Expanded Integrated Supports: STEP expands options and provides more choice across an individual's life trajectory. STEP re-emphasizes building person-centered plans that focus on choice and independence to better meet the needs and goals of a person and support them holistically.



Outcomes

The desired results of achieving STEP Goals that have direct impact on individuals receiving supports.

Vision

STEP supports interested individuals to move from congregate settings to more individualized, community-based supports and to build independence based on their vision for a good life.

Goals

Specific strategic targets that encompass several Actions and that lead to positive outcomes for individuals.

Actions

Concrete implementation steps taken by DDS in collaboration with various stakeholders to achieve systemic changes.

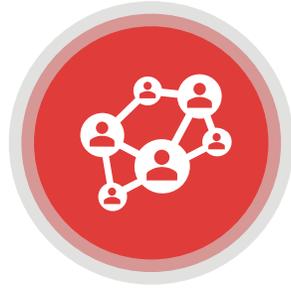


Desired Outcomes for STEP

Based on research and stakeholder feedback, DDS identified the following Outcomes as focus areas for STEP:



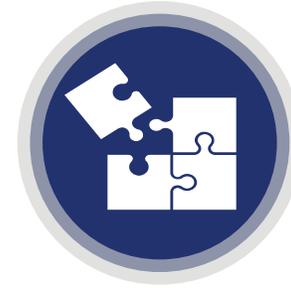
Individuals and families considering transitions have the outreach and support they need to make informed decisions



Providers have the resources and relationships to connect individuals to diverse employment options



Individuals have more access to assistive technology (AT) and remote supports



Individuals have increased opportunities to strengthen existing and develop new community connections



Providers are financially and strategically supported to be creative in transformation efforts



Outcome: Individuals and families considering transitions have the outreach and support they need to make informed decisions

For a system to be person centered, individuals and families need information to make the best decisions for them and their loved ones. For STEP this means information must support people to understand transition benefits, logistics, and options to help them make informed decisions. Individuals and families turn to providers and DDS staff for information. Improved outreach that increases awareness of STEP and practical details of how transitions will work can empower individuals and their families and help ease fears and hesitations.

What's my role?

- Individuals and their families: Receive information and participate in peer mentorship
- Case Managers and Providers: Receive and share information
- Bureau of Rehabilitative Services: Partner closely with DDS to provide benefits counseling

Goals



Support individuals to understand options

1. Develop materials that define all DDS supports in accessible language
2. Coordinate peer mentorship opportunities, such as employment clubs, for transition candidates
3. Support individuals to tour potential future settings with assistance from providers



Increase access to benefits counseling

1. Coordinate with BRS staff to provide these services to DDS service-recipients



Provide information to case managers

1. Create resources to support discussions with individuals and families
2. Develop specific training and resources about STEP
3. Hold sessions for case manager shared learning and collaboration



Provide information to providers

1. Create resources to support discussions with individuals and families
2. Develop specific training and resources on STEP
3. Hold sessions for provider shared learning and collaboration

Actions



Outcome: Providers have the resources and relationships to connect individuals to diverse employment options

Individuals who receive services need access to a range of jobs that meet their needs and interests. This is especially true when transitioning from group supported employment to more independent settings like ISE and Customized Employment. By supporting providers to build relationships within local business communities and with potential employers, DDS can support more individualized employment options that are appropriate for a variety of needs and preferences. This can lead to more individuals working in more independent, integrated settings.

What's my role?

- Individuals and their families: Explore employment opportunities with your circle of support
- Case Managers: Support DDS in identifying the employer network and support individuals to explore new options
- Providers: Share employment relationships and partners with DDS and other providers to expand the network

Goals



Identify employers that employ, or have employed, individuals using supports



Expand avenues for non-traditional employment supports



Communicate value of I/DD population in the workforce to employers

Actions

1. Invite current or recent employers to be included on a DDS employer list and share employer list with providers and DDS staff to support individual planning
2. Partner with CT Department of Labor CT Hires program

1. Expand participation in Project SEARCH and other internship to employment programs
2. Expand alternative opportunities for self-employment including microbusinesses

1. Publicize incentives for business owners to hire individuals with I/DD including work opportunity tax credits
2. Provide training for businesses and staff about hiring and working with individuals with I/DD
3. Create materials explaining ISE, assistive technology, and remote supports for potential employers



Outcome: Individuals have more access to assistive technology (AT) and remote supports

Assistive technology (AT) can promote increased independence at work and at home, helping individuals do more for themselves. In a work environment, the presence of support staff can be a barrier for individuals fully integrating into their work teams; remote supports can greatly minimize this barrier. In addition, increased utilization of AT/remote supports can help maximize existing staff, increase staff capacity, and reduce costs in a residential environment. Providers and staff are generally supportive of, and interested in, AT/remote supports but expressed challenges identifying options or successfully implementing given current staffing shortages.

What's my role?

- Individuals and their families: Explore AT options through resources and mentorship opportunities, consider applying for grants
- Case Managers: Review and share new AT and remote supports resources and materials including grant information
- Providers: Share AT success stories with other providers and with case managers, explore potential of AT and remote supports

Goals



Staff training and support

1. Support a statewide outreach campaign for provider recruitment with an emphasis on remote supports
2. Stand up and facilitate provider AT learning community to support knowledge sharing on AT implementation and best practices
3. Designate DDS staff technology champions to support providers with set up and troubleshooting and create resources for providers



Support for individuals & families

1. Develop and disseminate trainings
2. Start outreach campaign on potential benefits and ways AT/remote supports can increase independence



Improve access to AT & remote supports

1. Create menus of available AT and remote supports options
2. Increase capacity for AT assessments
3. Distribute grants to fund AT assessments, equipment, installation, maintenance costs, and training



Outcome: Individuals have increased opportunities to strengthen existing and develop new community connections

Given STEP’s aim to create more options for individuals to increase their independence, and to live and work in settings that are more integrated into the community, this is a key outcome and addresses concerns from individuals about social isolation or loneliness. Social supports and community connections are critical for personal well-being and promoting community integration. Communities also benefit when individuals who receive supports are active participants!

What’s my role?

- Individuals and their families: Share your interests with case managers and providers and take advantage of new opportunities
- DDS Regional Staff: Facilitate information sharing about opportunities to participate in community events and activities
- Providers: Access and use resources on strengthening connections, support individuals' access to the community

Goals



Support people to identify and strengthen natural supports in their communities

1. Create guidance for providers on supporting people to strengthen natural supports in their community as part of existing waiver services
2. Encourage case managers and support teams to re-emphasize natural supports as part of IP discussions
3. Facilitate connections to existing community groups and clubs to meet friends



Identify and expand opportunities for individuals to engage in community events and activities

1. Facilitate information sharing and transportation to support individuals to participate in events held by local organizations
2. Solicit and fund proposals from nonprofit organizations to facilitate community engagement activities

Actions



Outcome: Providers are financially and strategically supported to be creative in transformation efforts

In order to make STEP a success, providers must feel supported to push boundaries and innovate within the current system. To facilitate creative approaches that expand options for individuals, DDS is offering both financial and strategic support to provider agencies. This includes a financial incentive program for STEP transitions from congregate to more independent, individualized supports. Additionally, DDS is prepared to collaborate with providers to implement innovative approaches to providing supports that best meet the preferences and needs of individuals.

What's my role?

- Individuals and their families: Talk with providers and case managers about transitions, if interested
- Case Managers: Support providers to have transition conversations with appropriate individuals based on their personal plans and goals
- Providers: Take advantage of supports to facilitate person-centered transitions and implement innovative service delivery models
- DDS Regional Staff: Review provider plans and work with providers to find routes to implement promising approaches

Goals



Incentivize STEP Transitions

1. Provide incentives to providers that support individuals to transition from DSO and GSH supports to CE and ISE
2. Provide incentives to providers that support individuals to transition from CLA/CRS supports to IHS supports
3. Provide incentives to facilitate transitions and maintain current supports while slots are vacant as a result of transitions



Provide technical assistance to providers as they complete STEP transition plans

1. Hold Office Hours to provide direct support to providers completing transition plans
2. Schedule 1-on-1 assistance as requested by providers
3. Hold informational sessions to educate providers about STEP and available incentives
4. Provide guidance materials to support providers in completing plans



Support providers to explore alternative service delivery models

1. Create additional DDS support and flexibilities for providers to pursue innovative approaches
2. Encourage the delivery of IHS in clustered or supportive housing arrangements to improve staffing efficiency
3. Develop geographically-based networks of supports to increase coordination between provider agencies supporting individuals living in the same area

Over the next year, DDS will implement these activities through collaboration between DDS staff, providers, individuals and families, and other partners

Based on the activities outlined, you can expect to see progress towards STEP goals over the following timelines. Please note, for ongoing activities like increased access to benefits counseling, the timeline shows to launch.

Outcome	Goal	Start	End
Outreach & Support 	Support individuals to understand options	In Progress	3/1/2025
	Increase access to benefits counseling	In Progress	12/31/2023
	Provide information to case managers & providers	In Progress	5/31/2024
Diverse Employment Options 	Identify employers that employ, or have employed individuals using supports	10/2/2023	4/1/2024
	Expand avenues for non-traditional employment supports	In Progress	9/2/2024
	Communicate value of I/DD population in the workforce	1/8/2024	6/3/2024
Assistive Technology & Remote Supports 	Staff training & support	In Progress	6/28/2024
	Support for individuals & families	In Progress	12/4/2023
	Improve access to AT and remote supports	In Progress	6/30/2023
Community Connections 	Support individuals to strengthen natural supports	6/5/2023	9/2/2024
	Expand opportunities to engage in community events and activities	In Progress	1/8/2024
Incentives and Support to Providers 	Incentivize STEP Transitions (timeline pending funding availability)	In Progress	3/31/2025
	Provide technical assistance to providers as they complete STEP transition plans	In Progress	6/30/2023
	Support providers to explore alternative service delivery models	In Progress	9/30/2024

Note: Timelines represent the primary period the activity takes place; ongoing impact is expected but not shown on this chart.

DDS focus areas beyond scope of STEP

DDS continues to lead additional efforts to support transitions and community inclusion outside of the STEP Plan. Some related areas of effort include:



**Increase access to
accessible, affordable
transportation**



**Increase access to
accessible, affordable
housing**



**Increase workforce
capacity and
efficiency**

Consider adopting sister agency approaches

STEP will create opportunities for innovation throughout the DDS system. DDS is encouraging providers to put forward and explore approaches that are a departure from their usual efforts. In addition to working with individual providers to support creativity, DDS may wish to consider how approaches used by other departments within Connecticut could apply to the DDS population. This would require identifying how they fit into existing waiver services and rate structure or, in most cases, amendment to current waivers. The following are approaches for consideration.

Approach Name/Example Program	Description	Funding Approach
DMHAS Social Clubs	Drop-in settings focused on helping individuals cultivate community living, working, and social skills. These clubs provide opportunities for individuals to get to know others that may have similar interests and goals to them. Note: DMHAS is considering a transition to more integrated options.	Providers receive a set amount to run the program. Grant funded.
Assertive Community Treatment (ACT)	Evidence-based practice that leverages a multidisciplinary team to reach a pool of individuals with severe mental illness at risk of psychiatric crisis and hospitalization. Includes a range of services with a focus on treatment and supports in community settings or the individual's home. Includes supports focused on community integration and also helps address needs of family members.	Largely grant funded. Began with withheld incentive to achieve program fidelity.
Individual Placement and Support Team (IPS)	Evidence-based approach to employment support currently used by DMHAS. Focused on competitive employment that matches individual needs and preferences. Includes targeted job development. Provided by employment specialists who work with 20 or fewer people at a time. They spend significant time in the community developing relationships with employers and potential employers. Employment specialists are part of the treatment team for coordinated supports. BRS plays a role with frequent counselor check ins.	Grant funded. Providers monitored for fidelity to the model.

Consider updating existing approaches

STEP will create **opportunities for innovation** throughout the DDS system. This will include revisions to existing approaches. In addition to supporting provider efforts, DDS may wish to support with statewide changes. The following are examples of potential routes to pursue:



Blended Supports

- A change to how providers are paid for delivering supports. Would require regulatory changes.
- Combines an individual's authorizations for residential and day supports
- Creates increased flexibility for providers to deliver more person-centered supports integrated into the community



Increased Transition Coordinator Support

- Increase availability of Transition Coordinators, to provide individuals with more transition support to make it easier to join the workforce after graduation
- Expand these roles to allow more coordination with individuals and families, DDS, and potential providers
- With greater investment in transition services, individuals will be able to take advantage of STEP priorities and resources to move into supports that are tailored for their needs

Acronym table

Acronym	Definition
ACT	Assertive Community Treatment
ARPA	American Rescue Plan Act
AT	Assistive Technology
BRS	Bureau of Rehabilitation Services
CCH	Community Companion Home
CE	Customized Employment
CLA	Community Living Arrangement
CMS	Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
CRS	Continuous Residential Supports
CTDOT	Connecticut Department of Transportation
DMHAS	Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services
DOL	Department of Labor
DSO/DSH	Day Service Options
DSP	Direct Support Professional

Acronym table

Acronym	Definition
GSE/GSH	Group Supported Employment
HCBS	Home and Community-Based Services
I/DD	Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities
IHS	Individualized Home Supports
IP	Individual Plan/Planning
IPS	Individual Placement and Support
ISE	Individual Supported Employment
NCI	National Core Indicators
SACs	Self-Advocate Coordinators
STEP	Supporting Transformation to Empower People
VBP	Value-Based Payment