

STEP TA Webinar: Building Family Buy-in

STEP (Supporting Transformation to Empower People) Technical Assistance (TA) Summary

April 23rd, 2024

Session Description

This TA session focused on strategies for addressing concerns individuals and their families often have about transition periods. Opportunity Works Connecticut (OWC) and a DDS case manager discussed some of the strategies they use to communicate with individuals and their support teams. Presenters emphasized that no one is obligated to move as part of STEP. This is an individualized process, and providers are prioritizing close coordination with support teams to address personal risks and challenges with ongoing communication and tailored mitigation strategies.

BRS Presentation and Discussion



1. Introduction to Building Family Buy-in

- Throughout STEP implementation, DDS has been committed to the importance of transparency, informed choice, safety nets, and flexible transitions to support interested individuals to shift towards supports offering greater independence.
- In a transition, the most important consideration is the individual and their needs. It is essential to coordinate with them, their family, and support team for successful transition and to provide individualized supports.
- Providers with effective transition programs have started with early and frequent communication with individuals and families and supplemented these efforts with resources to make them feel comfortable and informed about the process.
- No one is required to transition as part of STEP. This is an individualized process where each person has their own unique needs, barriers to transitions, and concerns throughout the process.



2. OWC's Experience and Approach

- OWC shared some of the primary concerns relayed to them by families of individuals considering transitions, such as:
 - Changing employment schedules and hours that impact routines. Work hours can be unpredictable and may not provide supports during the day when the family is used to support
 - Finding reliable transportation to employment sites
 - Nervousness about losing social relationships made in GSE and concerns individuals will not form new ones in ISE
 - Reduced availability of long-term job coaching and other supports in ISE compared to GSE and transitional supports
- To address these concerns, OWC met early and regularly with individuals and their families to identify individualized strategies.
- These conversations provided opportunities for families to ask questions, gather information, and ultimately proceed with planned transitions.
- OWC also updated a resource called the "Pathway to Employment Handbook" that they have used for years that provides quick-hit answers to questions shared by transition candidates.

- Having a resource like this has been essential in informing families to help them feel comfortable throughout the process without needing to schedule additional meetings to address basic questions.



3. Case Management Perspective

- OWC's emphasis on a whole team approach, including staff, case management, and of course the individual and their family is key to their effective communication during transitions.
- The agency reached out to case managers at the start of their STEP efforts to make them partners in identifying and engaging with potential transition candidates.
- Transparency was essential, and OWC did an excellent job of clarifying details of planned supports, transition timelines, and impacts to individuals depending on their target support.
- OWC also dedicated time to working with case managers to help them understand the agency's overall STEP plan and priorities which made case managers more effective in answering questions and concerns from the individuals they work with.
- Based on conversations with OWC, this case manager developed a list of transition-related questions and answers to help individuals and their support teams navigate the transition. For example, this guide proactively addressed concerns regarding timelines and flexibilities for transitioning back to a previous support.
- A role of the agency during this process is to afford individuals the dignity of risk; they should have the information they need throughout the process to understand what it takes to make a successful transition. Ensuring dignity of risk, while setting individuals up for success, is a collaborative effort between the individual and their family, the agency, and the case manager.