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Step By Step, Inc.



Newsletter - Fall 2024

Step By Step Licensed To Provide Advanced Level WRAP Certification

Step By Step, Inc. is pleased to announce that we are now a licensed organization to provide **Advanced Level Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) certification and Re-**



Certification. Wellness Recovery Action Plan® (WRAP) is an evidence-based, self-directed wellness process for anyone who wants to get well, stay well, and create the life they want - despite life's challenges.

In October, we received our license from **Advocates for Human Potential**

(AHP), the owners of WRAP. This is a significant achievement that will surely benefit many individuals seeking to enhance their wellness and recovery journey.

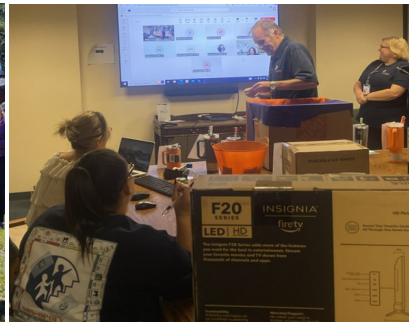
enhance their wellness and recovery journey.

Step By Step, Inc. began implementing WRAP as an employee benefit and continues to provide Seminar I, II, and III to employees, individuals in services, and throughout our community.

WRAP can help you (1) shape every aspect of your life the way you want it to be; (2) gain freedom from troubling thoughts, behaviors, or patterns; and (3) feel empowered in making decisions about your life. For more information on WRAP and to learn how you can participate in a seminar or become a WRAP facilitator, please visit our website, StepByStepWRAP.com.

Thank you for your support as we continued to foster wellness and recovery!

2024 Direct Support Professionals Celebration



The **Staff Appreciation Committee** in the **Northeast Region** coordinated daily activities during DSP Week, including Monopoly T-Shirt Drop, Puzzle Cookie Drop, Carnival Day (see above photo, left), Virtual Bingo and Virtual Prize Raffle (see photo, right: **Eric Lindsey** draws one of the winning names).

Celebrating and thanking Staff in the **Southeast Region** for their hard work and dedication.

Thank you, Direct Support Professionals! Throughout **Step By Step's regional offices**, the dedication and hard work of our **Direct Support Professionals** was celebrated during September 8-14, 2024.

Direct Support Professional Recognition Week is an annual week of nationwide celebrations in which we all honor the professionals who make

up the foundation of supports for people with disabilities. They are essential in supporting individuals with disabilities through community inclusion and by empowering people to live with dignity in their homes, workplaces, and communities.

Step By Step salutes its **Direct Support Professionals** for the vital work they do in service to our individuals. Their job requires technical and value

-based skills/knowledge, experience, professionalism, respect, and compassion. Their work is as diverse as the population it serves, but the focus is always on the needs and wants of individuals being served. Direct Support Professionals enable

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WRAP Presentations



Jamie Fiel, SBS Service Director, presents WRAP information at **NADD's** Arizona conference.

Step By Step has been conducting **WRAP (Wellness Recovery Action Plan)** seminars in our Intellectual Disability (ID) program for the past year. Individuals in programs (both residential and non-residential) have been participating in wellness seminars with their direct support professionals.

Throughout the last year, Step By Step has been collecting data on how implementing WRAP in our ID Programs has had an increased benefit in overall wellness. Using a WRAP has provided the individuals and staff with resources needed to enhance and maintain wellness, along with gaining a better understanding of those they serve. Toolboxes has been vital in helping both those in the program and our staff identify ways to manage life's stressors and challenges. Identifying a daily plan has provided the staff with a better under-



RCPA Conference, representing Step By Step, l. to r.: **Joann Heller**, **Megan R.**, **John Leach**, **Lauren J.**, **Kelly Mercadante**, and **Jamie Fiel**.

standing of things individuals need every day to stay happy and healthy.

In September, Step By Step, Inc. had the opportunity to present at the **Rehabilitation and Community Providers Association (RCPA)** conference on how we have implemented WRAP with those persons with developmental distinction. **Jamie Fiel**, Service Director; and **John Leach**, Program Director; and two of our individuals in programs, along with their direct support professionals, provided a presentation on how they use WRAP and their daily toolboxes to maintain their wellness.

In October, **Jamie Fiel** and **Lesley Corey**, Step By Step's Executive Vice President of Operations/COO, presented at the **NADD (National Association of Dual Diagnosis)** conference in Arizona on using WRAP with

persons who have an intellectual disability. These events highlighted the potential of WRAP in enhancing the lives of participants.

WRAP is an approach to daily living that supports a person in maintaining or rebuilding wellness through life's challenges. WRAP promotes health, wellness, and safety. It's a wellness and recovery system created BY you and FOR you through a standard workshop process. WRAP is based on the concept that you are the expert on yourself. Only you can create a plan to address your challenges and goals. WRAP helps you make your life more the way you want it to be.

WRAP emphasizes self-determination, personal wellness, and recovery, equipping individuals with the tools to manage their mental health and well-being. By sharing success stories and best practices, the presentations showed how WRAP can foster independence and improve quality of life.

The engagement of professionals and advocates at these conferences serves as a vital step towards creating a more inclusive society, where individuals with developmental disabilities can thrive. The discussions inspired efforts to implement WRAP more widely, demonstrating its potential to make a difference in the lives of many. For more information on WRAP, please visit StepByStepWRAP.com

Employee Assistance Program (EAP) Awareness Campaign

Step By Step, Inc. employees are reminded to take a look at the many benefits available to them through the **Employees Assistance Program (EAP)**. **Total Care EAP** not only provides help for significant life problems, but also makes available work/life benefits to address the everyday problems involved in juggling work and family. There are also benefits available that are designed to enhance quality of life not just for em-

ployees, but their family members as well. In addition, there are also resources to help employees achieve their best through training, coaching and wellness.

Some tools available that may be helpful: locate childcare services, explore financial scenarios, take a health/well being self-assessment, get legal help, save money, or attend a webinar.

How to access your benefits: Go to www.theEAP.com and click the Member Login button. If you already registered, enter your User Name and Password. If you don't have an account, click on REGISTER and fill out the form to create a User Name and Password, then click Register. You only need to register once.

A Message From Eric - Servant Leadership

Hello Step By Step Employees,

As we begin to bring the year 2024 to a close, I hope that you are preparing for holiday celebrations with your family and that you are having a wonderful time together.

In 2025, we will begin learning about **Servant Leadership** which is a powerful way to work with and for the people who we support. Please take a moment to continue to learn a bit about this exciting philosophy of leadership by reading below.

There are various management styles that organizations employ during the course of a company's lifespan. Leadership styles are not only reflective of the current leadership of an organization, but the culture produced as a result of the implementation of a particular management style. Examples of some leadership styles include: Situational Leadership, Coaching Leadership, Transformational Leadership, and Democratic Leadership, among many more.

Organizations periodically change their approach as a result of market needs, service changes, clientele changes and organizational intent. Changes may occur quickly; however, many organizations choose to employ the same management leadership formats over extended periods of time.

One of the Management Leadership styles gaining much momentum recently is "Servant Leadership." Servant Leadership prioritizes the growth and well-being of people and communities over oneself and emphasizes putting others' needs first. In other words, instead of the team serving the leader, the leader works to serve the team.

Leadership, as identified above, not only includes leadership positions at all levels of an organization and Board of Directors, but anyone who has a stake in the success of and can help influence the growth and stability of an organization.

What is Servant Leadership?

According to the Indeed Editorial Team, "traditional leadership typically revolves around one person at the top who exercises power over their team. Servant leadership is distinct in that the leader shares power by serving those under them and prioritizing the needs of others. This type of manager believes that when their team members feel personally and professionally fulfilled, they produce high-quality work more efficiently and productively. Businesses that follow a servant leadership philosophy tend to have stronger work cultures with high employee morale and engagement. Employee satisfaction and col-

laboration are important concepts in servant leadership. This leadership style creates a work environment in which employees at all levels feel respected, appreciated and valued".

Servant Leadership is generally comprised of several core values that have a similar concept across the vast writings and teachings of Servant Leadership. A sample of these Core Values includes the following: (1) Empowering Others; (2) Being Empathetic; (3) Building Community; (4) Choosing an ethical approach; (5) Commitment to an Organizational Vision; (6) Commitment to Growth; (7) Inspiring Others; (8) Demonstrating Interest in Others; (9) Having Foresight; (10) Being Flexible.

Over the next few newsletters, we will talk more about the values and virtues of Servant Leadership, as well as extending our organization to this particular organizational management style. You can explore more information on your own by doing a simple google search on Servant Leadership. There is a vast amount of reading materials available.

Thank you for all that you do for our consumers and Step By Step!

Best,

Eric Lindey, President/CEO

Tales of Contemporary Fraud, Waste, & Abuse

Every day there are new reports of Medicare and Medicaid fraud in the national headlines. This series, brought to you by Step By Step's **Quality & Compliance Department**, will highlight some of these reports. Names will be omitted, but all other details will be included.

It is our hope that examples like the following can serve to remind all Step By Step, Inc. employees to always maintain integrity and honesty in your reporting, documentation, and billing.

On October 15 and 16, 2024, numerous Texas newspapers reported that a 59-year-old Houston man was found guilty of 15 charges in a massive, mul-

ti-year Medicare fraud scheme that affected the lives of many unwitting Medicare recipients. Between 2014 and 2021, he set up 14 pharmacies with false owners (or "straw owners") who were essentially his employees, aiding in his scheme. The man proceeded to "buy" protected medical information on primarily diabetic patients. He collected their identification numbers, healthcare information, and physician names. Using his 14 pharmacies, he submitted \$200 million in false claims for diabetic equipment and topical creams. The patients whose information he stole were largely unsuspecting, as claims were processed for these items through

Medicare.

The Houston fraudster also bribed an employee of a nationally respected, accreditation agency with \$200,000 for a stamp of respectability and the authorization to operate as a retail network pharmacy. Because the accreditation entity received federal funds, the bribery charges were maximized. His sentencing will be January 7, 2025.

Remember to protect your personal information and the information of those for whom you provide services. As this story shows, some very unprincipled people are on the market to buy it.

Halloween Events Held Throughout Step By Step



Left photo: NE Trunk or Treat , Bistro Chez Remy, l. to r.; Gerri Rogan, Madelaine Mills, and Patti Blazaskie. Center photo: Pathways Program party attendees. Right Photo: Winning entrant, Vocational Department's fairy garden pumpkin house.



Left photo: SE Region MH Halloween party costume contest winners, l. to r., Antoinette H., Darnell S., and Alicia C. 2nd photo: SE Region ID Halloween party/trick or treating, front row, l. to r.: Alicia L. and Martha Johnson, Direct Support Staff. Back row, l. to r.: Alhaji Kosia, Direct Support Staff, John S. and Kahileo M. 3rd Photo: Tracy Ciabattoni, Lehigh Valley MH Training Coordinator, participating in Lehigh Valley's Trunk or Treat celebration. 4th Photo: Western Region's Trunk or Treat, l. to r., Michael B. and Dee Larson, Direct Support Staff.

During the Halloween festive season, Step By Step staff throughout the Agency spearheaded various competitions, parties, and events. The excitement of Halloween presented a great opportunity for everyone to celebrate team spirit and have fun!

The **Northeast Region/ Administration** held their annual Trunk or Treat for individuals, along with a competition for the best "trunk." The **Pathways Program** organized a Halloween Party, with a report that all attendees had a "ghoulishly" good time.

There was also a **pumpkin decorating contest**, with a winner from each department (IDD, MH, CBH & Other), along with an overall first place winner. The competition fostered camaraderie as participants showcased their creativity and had fun. Congratulations to the **Vocational Department** who was awarded the top prize for their fairy garden pumpkin house.

Jeff Sherwood, Southeast MH Service Director shared, "I want to thank my team for helping put on one of the best Halloween parties for our individuals. Whether it was the costume contest or the Hallow-

een bingo, it was such a fun time!" The **Southeast Clifton Office ID/A Program's** individuals had a great time at the Halloween celebration held there.

The **Lehigh Valley Region's** Trunk or Treat showcased some very clever displays. Individuals in the **Western Region** enjoyed a pizza party with music and dancing, in addition to a Trunk or Treat.

Kudos to all who took part in any of the Halloween events held throughout Step By Step. Your participation, creativity, and efforts made Halloween extra fun for everyone!

It Takes Everyone's Help To Succeed With Workplace Safety

While safety is at the top of the list for our day-to-day tasks here at Step By Step, it's not easy with the growing size of the agency, our footprint across the state, and all of the variables that go into making SBS the premier provider in our field each and every day. So, to continue to drive safety across the agency, the **Property & Risk Department** is tirelessly looking for ways to improve and grow our safety culture here at the agency.

While I could easily fill this newsletter with all the steps we are already taking and the plans and vision we have for the future of safety at the agency, I'd just like to give you a quick update on a few of them below.

One of these is with the establishment of a new **dedicated email address**, safety@stepbystepusa.com. **Staff are encouraged to send all of their safety concerns** to this email address. Whether they are new ideas, concerns, suggestions or even complaints, all emails are welcome and staff should feel free to send each one. The department will then look into them and reply back to staff with an answer and our plan of action. Your thoughts or ideas may be the one that saves and prevents an injury, so the agency is counting on you to let us know!



The department also has a **dedicated site for staff to input maintenance requests** on the PUPS database. It is at: <https://sbs.pupsehr.com/login>. This maintenance site is in its early stages but has already received approximately 350 requests for repairs. We are happy to report we have closed out or completed nearly 75 percent of these requests. This is a great tool for the agency because it helps to cut down on overall maintenance costs and repair time, as well as eliminating safety hazards for consumers and staff.

And when staff and consumers are on the road, in conjunction with the agency's insurance carrier, we have instituted a **new vehicle GPS program** to make sure everyone gets to and from their destination safely. This new GPS system not only monitors speed, but also vehicle safety, by alerting if the vehicle was in an accident, if there is any aggressive driving, and/or if there are any mechanical problems with the vehicle. It's a great system and also helps the agency to get very attractive rates on

its auto insurance coverage.

And finally, we have also **redesigned our agency's Safety Committee**, with the help and guidance of our insurance carriers. This new committee,

while smaller in size, is no less effective and is comprised of safety officers from across the state and includes **Scott Gomb** and **Mary Ellen McLean**, **Savannah David** and **Christelle Hoffman** in the Northeast; **Jeff Sherwood** and **Tammy Johnson** in the Southeast; **Robin Martin** and **Anthony Rubio** in Lehigh; and **Cheryl Spooner** and **Nicole Wood** from the West. Each of them brings a strong desire and drive to the committee and we are excited to have them. This Safety Committee meets virtually on a monthly basis and as time goes on, staff will also have the opportunity to attend the meetings if they'd like as an observer.

We are excited for the future of safety here at the agency and going forward, with your help, the Step By Step family will continue to make the agency a great place for our consumers to call home and staff to work at each day!

Scott L. Gomb, Manager, Property & Risk Department, Step By Step, Inc.



Step By Step Foundation

Leave a Legacy

By making a contribution to the Step By Step Foundation

Your contribution to Step By Step will be used to wisely enhance our education, training, health and rehabilitation services for those in need. Please consider making a gift to the Step By Step Foundation. Opportunities to leave a legacy and commit resources to help the agency continue to

serve those in need are plentiful. And, they can be important components of tax planning.

Call us at (570) 270-7909 or visit www.stepbystepusa.com to learn more about charitable giving through the Step By Step Foundation.

(The Step By Step Foundation is registered with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Bureau of Charitable Organizations.)

2024 Direct Support Professionals Celebration (continued from page 1)



Direct Support professionals in the LV Region were given sweet treats with messages conveying how much they are appreciated.



The Western Region celebrated DSP week by treating DSPs to pizza and holding several contests, including a "Clue-like" heist mystery, a Guess Who game, and a Scavenger Hunt. Car washes were awarded to anyone who participated in any activity during the week. Two of the many prize winners (photo to the left), l. to r., **Karen Dietrich**, DSS Lead, and **Jessica LaRose**, DSS Lead.

people to overcome challenges and realize their full potential and they are responsible for enhancing and sometimes transforming the lives of others. **Their work is highly valued and greatly appreciated!**

In recognition and appreciation of our Direct Support Professionals, who

work tirelessly each day to help individuals under their care, various celebrations and events were held throughout Step By Step's regions during DSP Recognition Week.

Eric Lindey, President and CEO, shared, "Our Direct Support Professionals are key in enabling Step By

Step, Inc. to realize its Mission. They are the center of all we do as an Agency. Thank you for all you do every day to enrich the lives of those we serve! And thank you to everyone played a part in honoring them during this special week of recognition and appreciation."

The holiday season is a perfect time to reflect on our blessings and seek out ways to make life better for those around us. May your holidays and upcoming new year be filled with love, laughter, and happiness.



Celebrating over 40 years of excellence

Step By Step, Inc.

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We're on the web at
www.stepbystepusa.com



Karen Zomerfeld, Editor. For more information on contents in this newsletter, please contact info@stepbystepusa.com. Special thanks to the following employees for newsletter contributions: Madelaine Mills, Eric Lindey, Robert Blazaskie, Philip Fritchey, Jeff Sherwood, and Scott Gomb.