

# Secondary Transitional Experience Program (STEP) – Informational Brief for School Administrators

## **1. Why STEP is a valuable program for schools:**

STEP, a program approved by ISBE and provided by the DHS Division of Rehabilitation Services (DHS/DRS) helps schools provide mandated transition services, such as:

- Built-in linkage to DHS/DRS, an agency that can assist students who have disabilities, with their post-school employment and career development goals.
- Provides work experiences that coincide with post-secondary employment goals; can include paid employment or internships.
- Promotes the provision of the following Pre-employment Transition Services (per WIOA - the Workforce Innovation and Improvement Act): a. Job Exploration Counseling, b. Workplace Readiness Training, c. Counseling on Post-Secondary Education, d. Instruction in Self-Advocacy, and e. Work-Based Learning Experiences.
- Allows students to gain school credit towards graduation, while gaining hands-on work experience, with as-needed support services.
- Research shows that students with disabilities who are able to gain employment in high school are much more likely to maintain employment as adults.

## **2. What administrators can do to make STEP work well for students and their school:**

The following support activities have been shown to lead to high-quality STEP services:

- Provide classes for students enrolled in STEP, to teach the career and pre-employment transition skills outlined in WIOA (see bullet point 1c above) for youth with disabilities who receive vocational rehabilitation services.
- Provide adequate classroom release time for teachers assigned to STEP, so that students receive needed assistance in finding and keeping good jobs/work experiences, and to promote good relations with local businesses.
- Provide student transportation assistance, as feasible, to allow for varied work experiences throughout the local business community.
- Plan for the training of Teaching Assistants who may need to serve as Job Coaches for those students who need 1:1 assistance for part or all of their on-the-job training activities (training often provided by the area STEP coordinator.)