

Secondary STEPS Program
Success Through Effective Positive Support

Parent/ Student Handbook
Program Information and Resources



Table of Contents

I. STEPS Program Policies

Purpose and Philosophy	3
Student Awareness of Handbook Requirements	3
Acceptable Use of Technology Policy	3
Dress Code	4
Student/Parent/Guardian Rights	4
Parent/Student's Responsibilities	5
STEPS Program Responsibilities	5
Sending District's Responsibilities	6
Referrals to Department of Human Services: Children's Protective Services	6
Attendance Requirements and Procedures	7
Transportation: Drop-offs/ Pick-ups	7
Leaving School with Staff and/or Agency Personnel	8
Instruction	8
Support Services	8
Monthly STEPS Staffing	9
Exit Criteria	9

II. Girls & Boys Town Specialized Classroom Management Model

Overview	10
Social Skills Curriculum	11
Teaching Interactions	12
Motivation System	12
Administrative Intervention	13
Agreement and Consent Form	14

I. STEPS Program Policies

Success Through Effective Positive Support

Huron Intermediate School District

Purpose and Philosophy

The purpose of this handbook is to inform the students, parents, guardians, and other interested persons of the various components, policies, and procedures of the STEPS (Success Through Effective Positive Support) Program. The STEPS Program is an alternative placement for students with severe emotional impairment and behavioral challenges. There is an Elementary Program and a Secondary Program. Both programs are operated by the Huron Intermediate School District (HISD) and located in the Huron Learning Center (HLC). The intent of this program is to provide a short-term placement for eligible students by providing an intensive social skills component within an educational setting.

Through this cooperative effort, an individualized educational plan is designed and implemented using a modified version of the Girls and Boys Town Model of Specialize Classroom Management. The purpose is to allow students to return to less restrictive settings as soon as they are able to meet the established behavioral criteria.

The overall goal of the STEPS Program is to maximize the students' learning potential, teach students to understand and manage their behavior, afford students the opportunity to enhance their self-esteem, encourage students to develop independence and preserve students' dignity and self-worth.

Student Awareness of Handbook Requirements

The STEPS Program will review the Student/Parent Handbook and the HLC handbook. The STEPS teacher is responsible for the Handbook reviews and will document that the student has been informed of the various rules, procedures and requirements contained in this handbook. Specific items of the handbook will be reviewed at the beginning of each marking period.

To assure us that each parent has received a copy of the Student/Parent Handbook, each parent and student will sign the "Parent/Guardian Acknowledgement of Handbook." Any student who shares time between attending the Elementary and Secondary programs will be responsible for and expected to follow all requirements for each program.

Acceptable Use of Technology Policy

The Huron Learning Center provides students with access to the HISD electronic communication system, which includes Internet, for educational purposes only. Students' use will include classroom activities, career development, and limited self-discovery activities as assigned by the program instructors.

There is a wide range of material on the Internet, some of which may not be fitting with values of the families of our students. It is not possible for the District to monitor and enforce a wide range of social values in student use of the Internet. A complete copy of the district's acceptable use policy is available in the Main Office for parents who have additional questions.

In using technology, students should be aware of the following parameters:

1. The use of any, and all technology is for educational purposes only, as assigned by the program instructor.
2. Students will not plagiarize or infringe on copyright of work found on the internet or the District's system. Plagiarism is the taking of ideas or writings of others and presenting them as if they were original to the user.
3. Students will not use the District system to access material that is profane or obscene (pornography) that advocates illegal acts, or that advocates violence, discrimination (hate literature), or that advocates harassment, discrimination or disruption to the educational process. Accidental access to these sites/information must be reported to the program instructor immediately.
4. Students shall not, for any reason, access personal email accounts originating elsewhere or the District's email system without permission of the program instructor.
5. If electronic communication becomes necessary students will use appropriate language at all times.
6. Access to "chat-rooms" is prohibited.
7. Students will not download or install software without prior authorization from the program instructor.
8. Students will not make configuration changes to the system software or take actions that block the use of a system by others.
9. Where applicable, students are responsible for the use of their individual account and should take all reasonable precautions to prevent others from using their account. Do not share passwords!!
10. Students should inform their instructor if they detect an inappropriate use of any technology or equipment.
11. Students may not utilize copying/printing equipment for personal purposes without permission of the program instructor.
12. Students should be aware that all technology, networks, software licenses are the property of the Huron Intermediate School District, and that routine maintenance and monitoring of the system may lead to the discovery that a student has or is violating the district acceptable use policy. An individual search will be conducted if reasonable suspicion exists that the student has violated the law or the student code of conduct. Students should be aware that their personal files are discoverable under the State of Michigan's Freedom of Information Act and HISD Board Policy.

Dress Code

Students are expected to arrive dressed appropriately for the program. Students shall observe modesty, cleanliness, and neatness in clothing and personal appearance. In addition:

1. Clothing with references to sex, drugs, alcohol, tobacco, racism, harassment and/or displaying inappropriate images or language disruptive to the educational environment may not be worn.
 2. Items that are revealing or provocative are unacceptable. Low cut tops will not be permitted. Sleeveless tops are acceptable but must cover the entire shoulder. There can be no gap, front or back, along the midsection while standing or sitting. Undergarments must be covered.
 3. Shorts and skirts must be knee length. Holes in pants are allowed at knees or below.
 4. Hats may not be worn. Hoodies are acceptable but the hood must remain down.
-

Student/Parent/Guardian Rights

1. The parent, student, or guardian has the right and responsibility to be present and participate at any meeting that involves the design and finalization of a behavioral plan including those that involve the use of physical management techniques.
2. The student has the right to receive the least punitive consequences possible, without jeopardizing the rights or safety of other students and staff. Staff must have data that less punitive approaches have not been successful in controlling the undesirable behavior before an intrusive and/or physical management program can be implemented, except in an emergency situation. Parents will be notified within in 24-hours of such restraint or seclusion.
3. The parent or guardian has the right to call an IEP at any time to discuss the specific behavior intervention plan and/or academic plan developed for their student. They may invite others of their choice to attend.
4. The student has the right to have the behavior plan developed and used by trained professional staff.
5. The student has the right to have his or her progress, as it is related to behavioral and academic goals, monitored by regular and reliable data collection.
6. The parent, student, and/or guardian has the right to have any behavior plan reviewed either at a pre-determined time or at the request of any of the involved parties.
7. The parent and/or guardian has the right to observe classroom staff's use of the educational and/or behavioral plan in class and during school hours. Prior arrangements must be made with the STEPS Program teacher and/or administrator. Parents/guardians must abide by the policy and guidelines outlined in the Huron Learning Center Student Handbook.

Parent/Student's Responsibilities

- Student will follow local district's school calendar including early dismissals and inclement weather (in the case of delays the STEPS Program will not run until noon).
- Sign STEPS contract, Parent Agreement Form, and Acceptable Use of Technology Policy.
- Actively participate in monthly staffings and IEP meetings and provide thoughts, ideas and suggestions to ensure the success of your child/self. *PARENT INPUT AND INVOLVEMENT IS VERY VALUABLE!*
- In addition to following STEPS Program expectations and local district school rules, STEPS students will abide by all rules outlined in the Huron Learning Center Student Handbook. Parents and students will be required to sign a form stating they have read and understand the rules and expectations outlined.
- STEPS students attending their local district will be responsible for taking a Goal Card and having their individual teachers fill out the card and initial appropriately. It is the responsibility of the student to return the filled out card to STEPS Program teacher.
- Complete all necessary forms:
 1. Emergency card
 2. Provide copy of Immunization Record
 3. Complete a lunch form
 4. Provide copy of Birth Certificate
 5. Complete a Medication Form (only if there are any medications that are taken during school hours)
 6. Sign a release of information

STEPS Program's Responsibilities

- Provide students with daily course lessons and instruction as agreed upon in the IEP.
- Provide students with social skills instruction.
- Develop and consistently follow a behavior plan following the Girls and Boys Town Specialized Classroom Management Model.
- Provide local district with recommended grade for courses taken.
- Contact parents/guardian, local school agency and/or community agency regarding behavior and/or academic progress on a regular basis.
- Provide locals with follow up support to ensure student success.
- To provide standardized testing (MEAP or MiAccess) to students who spend the majority of their school day at the STEPS Program.
- To complete Medicaid forms on students who spend the majority of their school day at the STEPS Program.

Sending District's Responsibilities

- Provide transportation to and from STEPS Program, regardless of the amount of time being served
- Assign student with credit for the course once STEPS has recommended the grade
- A local representative must participate in monthly staffings (i.e. counselor, principal, special education teacher, social worker, administrator)
- Provide the present level of performance for the student with accompanying educational goals and an Educational Development Plan (EDP) when necessary
- STEPS students who also attend their local district will be responsible for taking a Goal Card to their local district and having each individual teacher fill out the card appropriately. It is the student's responsibility to return the filled out card to the STEPS Program teacher. It is the responsibility of the teacher to fill out the card daily upon request.
- Notify STEPS in a timely manner of bus misconduct or any major or repetitive behavioral difficulties that occur (i.e. office referrals, suspensions)
- Follow behavior plan agreed upon at the IEP or staffing and provide regular feedback
- To provide standardized testing (MEAP or MiAccess) and county-wide benchmark testing to students who spend the majority of their school day at the local district
- To complete Medicaid forms on students who spend the majority of their school day at the local district

Referrals to Department of Human Services: Children's Protective Services

All staff members at the STEPS Program are *required by law* to report any suspicion of neglect or physical and/or sexual abuse to the Department of Human Services/Protective Services and/or appropriate legal authorities. It is required by law that all incidents be reported.

Parents must understand it is not our responsibility to assess the accuracy of these reported incidents. Education's responsibility is to report their suspicions or report what is relayed to them by a student, not to judge the merit or accuracy of them.

It is understood that this may, at times, cause difficulties for parents, but the Huron Intermediate School District staff cannot ignore our legal responsibilities.

Department of Human Services forms necessary for a protective services referral are available from the STEPS Program Teacher or the Huron Learning Center Office.

Attendance Requirements and Procedures

STEPS students will follow their local district calendar. In the event that the Huron Learning Center is closed and the local district is not, the STEPS Program will NOT run. See your local district calendar for the schedule. However, in the event that a local school is closed and the STEPS Program is still operating, parents may bring their STEPS student to the HLC during the student's regularly scheduled time. If parents cannot provide transportation, the student will be excused for that day.

The school district emphasizes the value of regular attendance in enabling students to benefit from the school's education programs. Michigan law places responsibility on each student to attend school on a daily basis, and on each parent or guardian to send their child to school on a daily basis. More important, however, is the effect of regular and punctual attendance on the student's educational achievement. Regular school attendance also helps develop positive traits such as punctuality, dependability and self-discipline that are important vocational skills needed later in life. Not only is each day's lesson important to the individual student, the student's participation in class contributes to the education of others. Frequent absences and tardiness, for any reason, are certain to adversely affect the student's schoolwork. Each student is expected to be in school every day except when illness, injury, or some condition beyond the student's control prevents attendance.

Excused Absence

One where the parent or guardian has called his/her child's teacher or the Huron Learning Center office by 9:00 a.m. the day of absence to report an illness. In cases where parents do not have a phone, a written excuse signed by the parent shall be submitted the first day the student is back in school. Some examples of an excused absence: illness, local school bus transportation problems, death of a family member, doctor's counseling, and/or court appointment (note will be required), or pre-arranged vacations (work must be made up). *In the event that a student is transported by Thumb Area Transit (TAT) it is the responsibility of the parent to call and cancel TAT transportation for that day.*

Unexcused Absence

One in which the parent or guardian has not called or written the school to report an absence, student is known to be "skipping," or a doctor's note has not been received for a student with three or more absences due to illness. Secondary students will follow their local district's policy regarding attendance and earning credit. STEPS students missing more than 10 days in a semester (or 7 days in a trimester) will be referred directly to the HISD Truancy Officer. In all cases of an unexcused absence, parents will be contacted and apprised of the absence by the classroom teacher.

Absences from school for reasons other than illness are discouraged. Excessive unexcused absences may result in loss of credit for the marking period(s). Probation officers will be notified for students involved in the court system or other relevant individuals or agencies.

Transportation: Drop-off/Pick-up

Drop-off at School

For safety reasons, please bring your child into the HATC office and make a staff member aware of his/her arrival. Students may walk to class alone from the HLC office unless problems arise, at which time other arrangements may be made.

Early Pick-up from School

If for any reason you need to pick up your child from school early, please send a note to your child's teacher or contact your child's teacher or the school office the day of the early pick-up before 9:00 a.m. to make arrangements. *If your child is not picked up by his/her usual bus time, he/she will be placed on the bus to be transported back to their local district.* Under no circumstances will students be allowed to be transported home by any person other than their parent or guardian without prior written authorization from the parent or guardian. We check for picture identification, so tell them to bring in a driver's license. Legally, we are unable to release a child to anyone other than the parents unless they are listed on the emergency form or we have permission from the parent.

In ALL cases, when students leave the STEPS Program early they must be signed out through the school office.

Leaving School with Staff and/or Agency Personnel

Occasionally, students at the STEPS Program have meetings with caseworkers, therapists, and other agency staff during the school day. When these meetings occur off the grounds of the STEPS Program, students will not be allowed to walk to their individual meetings but must be transported by an authorized adult. Exceptions to this directive will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

When it becomes necessary for students to leave the school grounds with authorized personnel, a sign-in and sign-out register will be maintained in the main office. It is the parent/guardian, authorized personnel, and/or students' responsibility to sign out of the building upon the student's departure and sign in upon return. A specific reason for leaving the school grounds will be required as will the signature of the authorized personnel accompanying the student. When deemed appropriate, written parent permission will be required before any student is allowed to leave the school grounds. Failure to sign in and out of the building may result in future loss of privileges or other disciplinary action.

Instruction

The STEPS Program offers a wide range of academic programs based on student need. The academic goal for each student is to bring his/her academic performance to its maximum, given the student's abilities. Academic focus for STEPS Program students will be discussed and agreed upon in the IEP meeting.

As secondary students enter the STEPS Program, emphasis is placed upon credits required for graduation. A schedule of class requirements is developed to assure the student a fulfillment of graduation requirements. The STEPS Program recommends credit or a grade to the student as agreed in the IEP and the local district is responsible for awarding the grade and credit.

Support Services

The STEPS Program has access to a variety of support services as important components of total programming for students. Below are support services offered and a brief description of each. Services are available to students based on need as determined by the IEP team.

- Teacher Consultant: Offers diagnostic and consultative services regarding academic instruction
- Speech and Language Therapist: Offers direct therapy for students with speech and language difficulties
- Occupational Therapist: Offers direct and/or consultative assistance to students and teachers who require physical adaptations in the learning environment
- Physical Therapist: Offers assistance in physical mobility for students who require special training

- School Social Worker: Offers direct and/or consultative assistance to students both individually and/or in groups to focus on individual social needs of the student
- Paraprofessional: Offers direct assistance to students both individually and/or in groups to focus on academics and social needs

Monthly STEPS Staffing

To help ensure the success of our students, it is important for all persons involved with each student to communicate with one another on a regular basis. Monthly staffing will be scheduled at an agreed upon time and will last 20 minutes each. Participants in the staffing will include parents/guardians, students, STEPS Program teacher, STEPS Program administrator, local district representatives (counselor, school social worker, teacher, administrator), and other relevant outside agencies (probation officers, case workers, counselors). Attendance at these meetings is a critical part in the success of our students in the STEPS Program.

Exit Criteria

Procedural steps for students leaving the STEPS Program and entering a local school program:

1. STEPS Committee will complete an Exit Criteria Form to include successful reintegration to general education and/or special education
2. STEPS Committee will call a staffing to be held with potential receiving school. Staffing to include:
 - a. HISD/STEPS Program Administrator
 - b. Potential Caseload Teacher/Special Education Site Facilitator
 - c. Local School Social Worker/MET Representative
 - d. Local School Administrator
 - e. STEPS Program Teacher
3. Upon consensus, a timeline is established

II. Girls & Boys Town Specialized Classroom Management Model

There are no bad boys. There are only bad environments, bad examples, bad thinking.

Father Edward J. Flanagan
Founder of Boys Town, 1917

Overview

The STEPS Program follows a modified version of the Girls & Boys Town Specialized Classroom Management Model. The Model is firmly rooted in principals of applied behavior analysis and social learning theory. Its underlying premise is that behavior is learned through feedback on behavior and its environmental consequences. The Model's focus is on teaching because troubled youth have social skills deficiencies and have not yet learned or been effectively instructed how to interact in a socially appropriate way with others. This behavioral model involves:

- the identification of desirable pro-social behavioral expectations
- the effective use of instructional strategies to teach those expectations
- the application of an incentive system
- the effective implementation of reinforcement principals

The Girls & Boys Town Model includes a social skills curriculum, teaching interactions, a motivation system, and administrative intervention.

Social Skills Curriculum

The Social Skills Curriculum provides the foundation for a structured educational approach to the socialization of school-age children. The curriculum offers a manageable yet well-defined set of sixteen social behaviors encompassing adult relations, peer relations, school rules, and classroom behaviors. This set of skills assists teachers to go beyond merely labeling problem behaviors (compulsive talker, lazy, restless, etc.), which often hinders identifying specific alternative behaviors that should be promoted, reinforced, strengthened, or taught.

Basic Social Skills

1. How to follow instructions
2. How to accept criticism or a consequence
3. How to accept "No" for an answer
4. How to greet others
5. How to get the teacher's attention
6. How to make a request
7. How to disagree appropriately
8. How to give criticism
9. How to resist peer pressure
10. How to accept compliments
11. How to make an apology
12. How to volunteer
13. How to talk with others
14. How to report other youth's behavior
15. How to give compliments
16. How to introduce yourself

In addition to these Basic Social Skills, students will be taught intermediate, advanced, and complex skills as they progress through the program. It is the responsibility of the student to understand and follow the expectations set out by the STEPS Program. All behavior plans will focus on the targeted social skills for each individual student.

Teaching Interactions

These interactions differ from other social skill approaches by using a brief interactive instructional sequence with the student when the behavior occurs. This technique uniquely combines efforts to manage student behavior with the care and concern of teaching an appropriate, alternative social behavior. Capitalizing on the teachable moment, when the learner is active and the learning is relevant, the teaching interaction allows the teacher to deal with the behavior problems in an efficient, effective, and humane fashion.

Motivation System

The Step System is incorporated as a comprehensive framework that helps students with moderate to severe behavioral deficits add social skills to their repertoire of behaviors. The four-step token economy reflects stages of skill acquisition and provides the appropriate degree of structure plus support necessary at each developmental level. This multistep approach meets each student's individual needs while providing a gradual transition from artificial consequences to more naturally occurring forms of feedback and internal controls.

Each student carries a Step System point card in which they record their points according to their strengths and areas of need. Students use their point card to document their progress towards their goal areas:

- Be prepared
- Follow directions
- Stay on task
- Appropriate responses/respect to staff
- Positive peer interactions
- Appropriate language
- Homework and/or classwork completion

Each student also works towards improving two target behaviors or personal goals that are individualized for them. Students receive their points based on their behaviors at the end of the class period.

The points awarded for appropriate behaviors are attractive and meaningful to students because of what they represent. Points have no real value; their worth is defined by what can be purchased with them. The menu consisting of the list of items and prices may include things such as school supplies, snacks/food, tangibles, special events, privileges, independent time, equipment rental, learning activities, personal hygiene products, etc. Students can request for special items to be added to the menu at any time.

At the end of the school day, teachers meet individually with each student to discuss the day's events that were recorded on the student's Step System point card. This one-to-one daily interaction enhances the teacher-student relationship and conveys the importance of learning social skills. Together the teacher and student review, summarize, and document what went well and what can be improved upon during that day's activities.

Daily Level

All students begin at this step, which is considered the skill-acquisition stage. While on Daily, students learn basic skills and appropriate alternatives to past behavior problems. At this stage, it is expected that students will make mistakes because their behavioral repertoires are still largely underdeveloped. Corrective feedback and

positive reinforcement are given frequently and immediately. Students are expected to demonstrate positive behaviors 75% of the time.

Progress Level

At the Progress Level, students should be demonstrating many more appropriate behaviors than they did on Daily. Students on Progress have a goal of 80%. Although teachers still provide a high level of social skill instruction, students begin to recognize errors in their behavior and start to identify better ways of responding to situations or expressing their needs. Students at this level enjoy an increase of freedoms and privileges from the Daily level; they can also earn more points each day.

Merit Level

Students at Merit should be demonstrating frequent use of the basic skills they learned while at Daily and Progress. They should no longer need the immediacy of corrective feedback and positive reinforcement and should manage their behavior more successfully. Merit students enjoy the benefits of increased privileges and independence in school, thereby preparing them for the responsibility of returning to their local school. Students have fewer structured interactions with the teacher and have more naturally occurring social reinforcements.

Each Step requires a student to earn a certain amount of positives in ALL their goal areas before earning the privileges of the next Level.

Administrative Intervention

Administration Intervention allows school administrators to function as effective change agents in response to more serious or continuing school discipline problems. It extends the teaching focus found in the other components of the Girls & Boys Town Education Model to include working with students who are “out of control” and have been removed from the classroom. This approach assumes that discipline is a process of training for correction or teaching alternative ways of responding to stressful classroom or school situations.

During the intervention, administrators help students regain self-control then teach them vital social skills and school expectations. An established sequence of consequences for office referrals promotes consistency and predictability while allowing for individualization of responses to rule violations. These are as follows:

- Reflection – talk about what happened and why, problem solve other solutions
- Owe time
- Contact parents by phone, letter/report, or conference
- Point penalty
- Step reduction
- In-school suspension
- After school detention
- Saturday detention
- Out-of-school suspension

Each time the student will write a reflection page and review it with the administrator. It helps the student rationalize the situation and problem solve. The goal of this teaching procedure is the youth’s successful return to the classroom.

Agreement and Consent Form

Please detach, sign, and return to STEPS Program teacher.

Parental/Guardian/Student Agreement

We/I the parent(s)/guardian(s) of _____, agree that our involvement is critical in the development of responsible behavior in my/our child. The behavior problems exhibited recently by my child indicate the need for changes in his/her entire environment. It has been agreed up on by the IEP team that the STEPS Program is the Least Restrictive Environment for my child at this time. The STEPS Program is intended to be a short-term placement for my child in hopes that he/she gains the skills needed to transition back into his/her local district. I have been explained and understand the Girls and Boys Town Expectations and the Specialized Classroom Management System to be used within the STEPS Program.

In addition, I fully understand that my child will follow all rules of the HLC and their local sending district as outlined in each handbook. At any time, should I have questions or concerns regarding my child or the program I am aware that it is my responsibility to contact a STEPS Program Committee Member to set up an appointment.

I have read and understand all of the contents of the STEPS Program Handbook and agree to abide by it. I also agree to participate in the following ways:

1. Participate in all monthly staffing and IEP meetings
2. Cooperate with staff recommendations
3. Communicate concerns, challenges, hopes, and desires with staff on a continuing basis
4. Encourage and support all STEPS Program expectations and building rules

My signature indicates that I have read, understand, and agree to the procedures and policies outlined within this handbook and that of the HLC.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

Student

Date