

## **STEPS Ministries Overview - Fall of 2020**

### **Introduction**

There are tremendous numbers of hurting people in Birmingham and the U.S. Our goals are to help people improve their lives, grow closer to God, and prevent addiction. Our strategy is to create and deliver content and training and work with other organizations to impact lives and enhance the quality of life locally and in families and communities around the country.

*“STEPS Ministries has a unique approach to prevent addiction by helping people before their lives are dangerously impacted. This is a ministry that is desperately needed!”*

(Richard E. Simmons III, Founder at The Center for Executive Leadership)

More people suffer from substance use disorder than cancer, diabetes, or heart conditions. It is a medical disease—an epidemic—causing more deaths than motor vehicle accidents, homicides, and suicides (National Center on Addiction and Drug Abuse). And of those suffering, the U.S. Surgeon General says that 90% of them will not get help. Even though addiction is treatable!

*“I value the importance of a proactive approach to addressing addiction. Having knowledge about the signs, symptoms, and behaviors of addiction can help family members and friends of those in addiction know how to react, respond, and prevent it. STEPS Ministries is uniquely qualified to do this work.”* (Justin Worthington, Principal at Red Street Investment Company)

Amazingly, addiction is also preventable! The U.S. Surgeon General said, “Few would disagree with the notion that preventing substance use disorders from developing in the first place is ideal. Prevention programs and policies are available that have been proven to do just that.”

*“The delivery of health care is shifting its focus from treating symptoms of disease to preventing it all together. STEPS is built upon real world experiences honed over decades that allow it to speak with authority to individuals, institutions, and companies concerning addiction and prevention.”* (Tom Majors, Vice President at Merge Healthcare)

Substance abuse in the U.S. costs society in many ways including increased healthcare costs, lower productivity, and loss of life and personal assets. The estimated cost of drug abuse in the United States is more than \$740 billion a year and growing (National Institute on Drug Abuse).

Addiction is also a business problem: “75% of people struggling with addiction are employed full-time” (Psychology Today). It impacts company productivity and profits as well as wellness, insurance, and benefits programs. Workers with substance issues are 3 times as likely to utilize medical benefits and are 40% of industrial fatalities and 50% of workers’ compensation claims.

*“STEPS is a book that can change lives. As a senior business executive, I have seen the difference in people who can demonstrate resilience in challenging circumstances. This book*

*will make you a more resilient person and help you achieve your highest potential.”*  
(Brad Rex, former General Manager at Disney’s Epcot Theme Park)

*“Steve Ward is a passionate trainer who ... delivers practical exercises that promote resilience and health consciousness. There are few trainers who combine deep corporate experience, first-hand knowledge of the importance of prevention, and also superlative facilitation skills.”*  
(Joel Bennett Ph.D., President at Organizational Wellness & Learning Systems)

Substance abuse is a danger for young people: “75% of high school students have used addictive substances including tobacco, alcohol, marijuana, or cocaine” (The Center on Addiction). That’s why STEPS Ministries delivers training to equip parents to help their kids avoid addiction.

*“Our church and staff firmly believe in and strongly support STEPS Ministries. Our church is increasing its focus on working with parents of youth. These parents are desperately looking for help to protect their kids against addiction, and STEPS Ministries is a perfect partner for the church in this effort.”* (Bob Flayhart, Senior Pastor at Oak Mountain Presbyterian Church)

*“STEPS Ministries is instrumental in helping individuals and families in areas of awareness, education, and connection for the topic of addiction.”* (Greg Werchanowskyj, Morgan Stanley)

I know first-hand the dangers of substance abuse. I was a highly-functioning alcoholic for 30 years, and my wife struggled with alcohol as well. We faced traumatic struggles and pain as our older son sank deeper and deeper into drug and alcohol abuse in high school.

Addiction is a tornado that tears family’s apart. I know many people who lost a spouse, sibling, parent, friend, or coworker to addiction. But the pain seems especially acute with parents, and I know far too many who have lost a son or daughter to this disease.

*“This seminar was the best investment of time I have made recently, and I can recommend this session to other parents without hesitation.”*

*“This is the beginning of a powerful, wonderful message, not just for folks in the middle of dangerous addiction, but even for the parent who does not fear this for their child.”*

*“I highly recommend this to everyone—so much insight and great information regarding addiction and the heart journey for all those touched by addiction.”*

Most people suffering from substance use disorder struggle alone under a blanket of shame and stigma forming one of the most disenfranchised groups of people in the country. With the right resources and by working together, we can tear down the barriers that block these people from improving their lives today so they can build a better tomorrow. We can impact lives.

Steve Ward

Founder and Executive Director at STEPS Ministries

## **Overview**

Many substance abuse issues are both treatable and preventable! Tragically, 90% of those struggling will not get help. STEPS Ministries is focused on the prevention of addiction.

Our business is saving and improving people's lives, and our vision is for all people to find hope, healing, and help and avoid the tragedy of addiction. Our mission is to promote healthy communities, organizations, and families by helping people develop resilience, achieve wholeness, and become intentional about preventing addiction. We help them develop resilience and acquire the ability to deal with life's challenges well and to achieve wholeness with emotional well-being, spiritual awareness, and personal excellence. We also help them become intentional on taking daily steps to prevent or lessen the impact of addiction.

STEPS Ministries is uniquely focused on early awareness, education, and prevention for addiction and related issues. We are dedicated to helping people, families, and organizations adopt wellness lifestyle practices that will prevent stress, depression, substance abuse, and other compulsive issues from ruining their lives. We take proven principles from the world of recovery and related disciplines and teach them to people earlier in the addiction cycle, before lives are destroyed. We deliver in-person and virtual training and coaching and digital content and education to help people recognize and deal with these issues early in the process.

STEPS Ministries works to address these needs in a highly differentiated fashion. We are uniquely and specifically focused on the prevention of addiction and mental health issues. We apply the personal experience of our Executive Director who understands the needs and issues of people struggling with addiction and those close to them. Our material outlines pragmatic, how-to steps and techniques that people can implement on a daily basis. We utilize evidence-based and evidence-informed concepts, and the recovery principles we portray have worked for millions of people. We have documented research-based frameworks and methodologies that guide our content and delivery. Our use of digital content and delivery allows us to impact a great number of people at low cost, and our content is universal and timeless in nature.

We focus on the prevention of addiction with practical, how-to information and training. We provide face-to-face and virtual seminars and coaching and deliver tools and training over the internet, and we leverage our impact by working with companies, local nonprofits, churches, schools, and other organizations. STEPS Ministries has a strategic focus on collaboration.

STEPS Ministries had many accomplishments in the last year including: (a) we offered life-changing content to over 10,000 people; (b) our programs were featured in media reaching tens of thousands of people; (c) every week, we reached over 1000 people with email and social media; (d) we taught seminars for over 400 people; (e) we met with more than 150 people one-on-one; (f) our nonprofit collaborated with over 20 organizations; (g) we created over 50 articles,

40 videos and podcasts, and an online Content Portal; and (h) we built the staff, processes, and platforms that position the organization to have a huge impact moving forward.

Current projects include: (a) Proactive Parenting program; (b) “Real Life 101;” (c) weekly blog with text/video/podcast; (d) growing impact via email, social media, and digital ads; (e) ongoing speaking, training, and coaching; (f) the “Courageous Hope for Hurting People” national event; (g) online Tool Kits for parents of kids, preventing addiction, handling stress, high-functioning addiction, and helping others; (h) launching a book and podcast; (i) building platforms, skills, and processes; (j) expanding resources (staff, interns, volunteers, agencies) and funding (grants, donations, revenue); (k) collaborating with nonprofits, recovery groups, companies, and others.

### **Challenges and Objectives**

Mental health and addiction challenges are some of the most destructive issues people face. Yet, the vast majority of resources are applied to treatment after the fact rather than on prevention.

Our approach is to reach people earlier in the cycle before their lives have been destroyed. We use secondary research to find proven principles and techniques, and we synthesize and adapt that material into useful education and content that is interesting and easy-to-understand. We do not attempt to address medical or psychiatric issues, but the good news is that there are many principles and behaviors that work very well if embraced sincerely.

As people move deeper into pain or progress toward wellness, they travel along what STEPS Ministries calls “The Journey.” There are common challenges people face along this journey, but there are ways that STEPS Ministries can help address them. We design content around a well-researched methodology called “PACES” and organize delivery to address these challenges:

People are often busy or distracted – We help them become more Proactive. We offer content and training online for convenient access. We hold virtual webinars and support meetings. We send content to people weekly through our blog and podcast, and we make it available through social media and digital advertising as well.

People believe addiction or mental health issues can’t happen to them – We focus on creating greater Awareness. We talk about real-life dangers involved with these issues and help people develop greater self-awareness so they understand, “Yes, it can happen to me or my family.”

People isolate (emotionally or relationally) and do not get the help they need – We promote positive Connection. We connect through outbound and inbound ways we offer content and we seek to establish a relationship. We help them deal with shame and encourage them to get help.

People remain in denial until the level of pain becomes high – We provide Education to help them examine the trajectory they are on in life. We help them “play the tape forward” and “count the cost” of their behavior to inspire them to make a change in their lifestyle choices or habits.

People don’t know what to do to get better and stay healthy – We provide useful, relevant, and practical Steps they can take on a daily basis. There is a clutter of information on the internet that is often confusing. Also, people learn and consume content in different ways. We synthesize the information that is out there into material they can understand and use to improve their lives.

### **How We Address Those Challenges**

We deliver useful material to help people improve their lives and prevent addiction and mental health issues from harming their well-being. As people move deeper into pain, they travel along what STEPS Ministries calls The Journey. We can help them at any stage of this journey.

### **The Journey: 5 Phases of Pain and How We Will Help**

- **Phase 1: Denial** – We will reach them and present them with relevant, easy-to-understand information that gets them thinking about life.
- **Phase 2: Discomfort** – We will serve them by offering them useful material related to their pain to deepen their interest in making a positive change.
- **Phase 3: Pain** – We will nurture them by establishing a connection through social media and enhance that relationship with content via email.
- **Phase 4: Fear** – We will encourage them by continuing to offer valuable content via email and presenting them with opportunities for deeper education.
- **Phase 5: Hopelessness** – We will equip them by utilizing our Online Training Center as an ongoing place to go for lifestyle education.

Two Content Frameworks are used in this work. The first is STEPS which was documented in the book *STEPS: A Daily Journey to a Better Life*. This methodology is based on the Twelve Steps used successfully by millions of people in over 200 types of recovery groups.

### **STEPS: A Daily Journey to a Better Life**

- **Surrender** – Surrender your will to God and make choices based on faith and courage.
- **Transformation** – Humbly admit your mistakes and make positive changes in your life.
- **Empathy** – Seek forgiveness and invest in good relationships.
- **Progress** – Spend time every day in prayer and meditation.
- **Service** – Serve as an example and add value to the lives of others.

The second Content Framework is PACES. This methodology was developed over several years from secondary research of subject matter experts in mental health, addiction and recovery, psychology, counseling, and related disciplines.

### **PACES: Developing a Wellness Lifestyle**

- **Being Proactive** – Be intentional in developing a positive lifestyle emotionally, spiritually, and personally.
- **Greater Awareness** – Exercise self-awareness and self-control and keep taking the next right step.
- **Positive Connection** – Share with someone in a vulnerable way and continue connecting with others.
- **Life Management Education** – Develop good habits and coping skills to live well one day at a time.
- **Planning the Right Steps** – Build a personal plan to move toward meaning and purpose.

### **Proven Methods and Collaboration**

Our content strategy is to intentionally select and utilize principles and techniques that are evidence-based, evidence-informed, and proven through the experience of others. Many of the recovery principles and techniques we utilize have been in practice for decades and have worked for millions of people all over the world. We integrate Biblical understanding and principles into some of our material that applies the wisdom of the most respected and well-used “life improvement manual” in history.

STEPS Ministries executes secondary research to apply the best and most useful findings and content of industry-leading organizations and individuals. We synthesize material from these subject matter experts into a form that is easy to understand and put into action. Our Content Frameworks, STEPS and PACES, integrate the best learning from decades of experience and from subject matter experts in addiction, recovery, and mental health. The Journey delivery framework is based on several years of research about mental health and substance abuse.

Much of our material on wellness and stress is directly based on work from Organizational Wellness & Learning Systems (OWLS). Evidence-based OWLS programs were cited in the U.S. Surgeon General’s report on “Facing Addiction in America.” Our Executive Director, Steve Ward, has been trained and certified on OWLS programs for “Resilience and Thriving: The Secret Power of Stress” and “Empowered Health Consciousness” and these programs are also certified by the National Wellness Institute (NWI).

We work with consultants and experts to augment our skills and processes. We partner with Electromagnetic Marketing around the effective delivery of digital content. We collaborate with Unstatus Your Quo on education development, marketing, and building content and processes. We use Audiofy to help us record effective audio content. Steve Ward also utilizes a network of other consultants and experts to share their learning with us in a wide number of areas.

Collaboration is a critical part of our strategy as approved by the STEPS Ministries Board of Directors. We collaborate with nonprofits, churches, companies, and other types of organizations and we will share content and training with organizations in Birmingham and beyond.

### **Key Plans**

The plans below are dependent on the acquisition of additional resources which we will continue to pursue. We are focusing our efforts now on current projects and will grow as resources allow.

In our first two years of operation, we helped many types of people in different ways and explored content and delivery options to find those that can work the best. STEPS Ministries is uniquely positioned to leverage and scale our ministry impact in the future. We have a great deal of content that is differentiated because it is prevention-focused, practical, holistic, and attractive. This content is timeless and universal so we can serve multiple audiences for many years and scale our impact effectively and efficiently through digital delivery and collaboration.

The operations of STEPS Ministries are to help people improve their lives and prevent addiction by delivering practical, how-to information and training. We offer in-person and virtual seminars and coaching and outbound delivery of content and training over the internet, and we leverage our impact through collaboration with other organizations. As we move on in our third year of operation, we will make adjustments (“pivot”) to become more focused as described below:

- In-person delivery – We reached many hundreds of people in seminars and dozens through coaching. Now, we will pivot toward more focus on virtual webinars and video training.
- Outbound digital delivery – We reached thousands of people through email and social media and tens of thousands through digital advertising and media. We will pivot and focus our efforts on a select number of audience-focused Programs starting with Proactive Parenting.
- Content – We built and repurposed material for many types of people. Moving forward, we will align our content to our Programs and organize it in an Online Training Center platform.
- Collaboration – We worked with dozens of organizations to serve more people, and we will pivot to focus on strategic collaboration with partners aligned with our Programs.

### **Audience-focused Programs**

More specifically, we have organized our activities around a number of programs and projects that help us reach different audiences more effectively and efficiently. Programs are audience-specific initiatives to deliver content and training to meet the needs of certain groups of people. Below are the audiences for programs we are in the process of developing and implementing:

- Parents – Our Proactive Parenting program helps teenagers avoid substance abuse by training parents to deal with the early stages of addiction including warning signs, communication, and intervention. It helps prepare kids to deal with risks they will face in the teenage years to prevent addiction and prepare them to avoid mental health issues young people often face.
- College students – We offer content and training in a curriculum titled “Real Life 101” to help college students develop an effective lifestyle that is balanced emotionally, spiritually, and personally and prevent issues such as anxiety, depression, and substance abuse.

- People in early-stage addiction or relapse – This program teaches people how to prevent addiction and recognize high-functioning addiction, and it encourages them to embrace recovery earlier versus waiting until their lives and families have been damaged or destroyed.
- Adults struggling with stress, depression, or other compulsive issues – We help people deal with stress more effectively and better handle issues and trials in their lives. We show that it is okay to have personal issues and there are things we can do to deal with them effectively.
- Families, friends, and coworkers of those struggling – This program shows how you can help the people around you by meeting and helping them where they are. It offers guidance for how churches, companies, coaches, sponsors, and mentors can help those in crisis.

### STEPS Proactive Parenting

Note: STEPS Ministries is committing significant staff and funding to this project and seeking additional resources next year to expand its reach to have the greatest impact on people’s lives.

Significant risks of substance abuse face young people today: “75% of high school students have used addictive substances including tobacco, alcohol, marijuana, or cocaine” (The Center on Addiction). The STEPS Proactive Parenting program will deliver proven, evidence-informed training to equip parents to help their sons and daughters avoid substance abuse and addiction.

This program will use the “PACES for Parents” methodology, built from years of secondary research, to address the goals of Preparation, Awareness, Connection, Education, and Steps:

- Preparation (P) – Get your life together emotionally, spiritually, and personally.
- Awareness (A) – Become more aware of your kids and the challenges they face.
- Connection (C) – Deepen and strengthen your relationship with your son or daughter.
- Education (E) – Equip them with skills to deal with life issues and situations they may face.
- Steps (S) – Build a plan to help your child become the man or woman they are meant to be.

### “Real Life 101”

Note: STEPS Ministries is committing staff and resources to development of this program and is seeking a school, company, or education-based organization to partner on the project.

Currently in development is a curriculum for college students to help them develop an effective lifestyle and avoid or lessen problems from substance abuse, anxiety, and related issues. This program will be piloted, most likely with a local university, and feedback will be used to adjust the curriculum and delivery as appropriate so it can be made available to other schools.

There will be 17 lessons with video and podcast versions, across these 5 integrated categories:

- Finding our “Why” - Understanding the Bigger Picture
- Developing Emotional Well-Being



- Achieving Personal Excellence
- Acquiring Spiritual Wisdom
- Tying it All Together - Taking Positive Steps

### The Prevention Project

Note: STEPS Ministries is preparing for this project for 2021 and seeking additional resources from grants, partners, and other sources to position us to work on the project next year.

The Prevention Project is a multi-year initiative that will support all of our programs and create one of the most effective sets of addiction prevention material and training in the country. We will integrate existing resources, create breakthrough new prevention content, and offer useful information to help people change their lives. This project is uniquely focused on the prevention of addiction by encouraging a wellness-based lifestyle, awareness of issues, connection to other people and helpful resources, personal prevention education, and intentional life planning.

Highlights of some of the activities that will be included in The Prevention Project include:

- Interviewing industry-leading subject matter experts on the prevention of addiction.
- Delivering online Life Improvement Tool Kits to help different groups of people.
- Launching the *Next Right STEPS* podcast as a key feature of The Prevention Project.
- Creating a new online course for widespread use on the topic of *Preventing Addiction*.
- Building an integrated Online Training Center for Prevention Project content and training.
- Multiplying the impact of The Prevention Project by collaborating with other organizations.
- Holding “virtual conferences” as online webinars to educate these groups on Prevention.

### STEPS Business Wellness

*Note: STEPS Ministries has the content and capability to develop and execute this project, but we are waiting to divert current resources to it until we obtain an appropriate corporate partner.*

STEPS Business Wellness is an initiative to develop and deliver workplace wellness training to enhance the lives of employees, prevent addiction, and increase personal and organizational effectiveness. Currently, this takes the form of customized consulting, speaking, training, or coaching delivered to an individual company or business organization to meet their needs.

STEPS Ministries is seeking a corporate partner interested in becoming an industry leader in delivering valuable and differentiated wellness training as a benefit program for its employees. We have the intellectual capital, raw material, and much of the content for an effective business wellness program. If we find a corporate partner willing to sponsor this initiative and invest in the development of the program, we will move forward. Once it is developed, based on the terms reached with our corporate partner, we will make the program available to other companies.

## **Board Members**

The Board of Advisors meet periodically with the Executive Director to offer strategic direction and oversight and serve as a visible representative of the ministry for the community.

- Richard E. Simmons III – Executive Director at The Center for Executive Leadership
- Libby Lassiter – President at Bayer Properties, LLC
- Tommy Brigham – Chairman of the Board at ARC Realty Co.
- Don Menendez – CEO at White Plume Technologies
- Tom Mayfield – President at M3 Resources USA LLC
- Harry Pearson – CEO at OneAscent Financial
- John Lovoy – CEO at Infomedia and Uptick Marketing
- John Thomas – Senior Vice President at Colliers International

The Board of Directors is involved in the ministry in an ongoing manner and utilize their passion and expertise to help the organization execute its mission and serve people well. They direct changes in strategy and provide accountability on finances, policy, and operations.

- Tom Majors – Vice President, National Accounts at Merge Healthcare
- Sheryl Matton – Consultant, Enterprise Marketing at Secureworks
- Greg Werchanowskyj – Financial Advisor at Morgan Stanley
- Justin Worthington – Principal at Red Street Investment Company
- Richard Mobley – Founder and Principal at The Seven Four Group
- E. Heath Goodson – Financial Strategist at The Covenant Group
- Jeff Howard – Founder and CEO at JLH Exponential, LLC
- Mark Henley – Vice President, Sales at Cottondale Wood Products

## **Executive Director**

Steve Ward is the founder and Executive Director of STEPS Ministries, a nonprofit organization with the goals of helping people improve their lives, grow closer to God, and prevent addiction. He is a writer, speaker, teacher, consultant, and coach in the areas of personal effectiveness, emotional well-being, spiritual growth, and the prevention of addiction and relapse.

Steve and his family battled significant addiction issues of their own. Coming out of those trials, Steve spent thousands of hours studying and writing about how to pursue a healthy, integrated

lifestyle that would lessen the risk of addiction. He wrote the book *STEPS: A Daily Journey to a Better Life* and publishes the *STEPS Journey Blog*, and he founded STEPS Ministries in 2018.

Steve graduated from Georgia Tech with a degree in Industrial Engineering. He worked at IBM for 38 years in management and leadership positions for Engineering, Business Transformation, Sales, and Global Marketing. Personally, he has consulted with many nonprofit organizations, led strategic planning for several, and worked with dozens of nonprofits over the past 20 years. He is an active member of Oak Mountain Presbyterian Church in Birmingham, Alabama.

## **Our Team**

Currently, we have 1 full-time staff member who is the Executive Director, 6 part-time, 2 college interns, 1 contractor, a few volunteers, and engagements with 2 content and marketing agencies.

## **Effects and Reaction to COVID-19**

Our organization has been affected by the COVID crisis and economic shutdown. Operations were impacted which increased our costs for helping people, and fundraising took a downturn. At the same time, the needs of those we serve increased dramatically. But we adapted and maintained our services, and we developed creative new programs to help other organizations and people who were affected by the health and economic crisis.

Operations and costs of our nonprofit were negatively impacted by the crisis. We adapted by acquiring video conferencing software and developed the skills and content to shift to virtual services. Fundraising was in a period of positive growth. But much of our support is generated through personal interaction with current and prospective donors, and in-person contact has been greatly reduced. People and organizations have faced economic hardships or uncertainty which also affected their giving. The good news is that we were able to keep helping hurting people.

In spite of those trends, early in the crisis we decided to shut down fundraising activity for a few months as we focused on helping people deal with issues during the crisis. We built a "2020 Survival Kit" to help people with stress and other aspects of the pandemic and used Facebook ads to deliver it to over 15,000 people. We created a video titled "Opportunities in a Crisis" and conducted a Facebook Live session called "Helping Others During a Crisis." We built a web page on "How You Can Help People You Know" and presented live over Zoom to groups.

The good news is that STEPS Ministries has a great deal of content to help people dealing with addiction and related issues. We can deliver much of our training and material over the internet, so we can help people who are struggling even if trapped in their homes. We have been able to continue the vast majority of our ministry activities even as we adjusted operations. We remain committed to helping people improve their lives, grow closer to God, and prevent addiction.