In 2015, First Step will celebrate its 37th anniversary. Thirty-seven years of supporting survivors. Thirty-seven years of working for justice. Thirty-seven years of systems change. Thirty-seven years of working to create a safe, healthy community for survivors of domestic and sexual violence. “Peaceful Families—Safe,” has helped First Step offer survivors hope, encouragement and resources.

As we have for 37 years, we will continue to take a stand against violence by speaking up, getting involved, and joining our First Step family. This year, I encourage you to join us, if you have not already done so. I thank you for your compassion and energy to help us stop the violence and support the courageous survivors who reach out and trust us at the most vulnerable time in their lives.

Thank you to every individual who support our efforts in creating a safety net for survivors of domestic and sexual violence. Those facing violence teach us that abuse can happen to anyone of any age, race, religion, sexual orientation, gender, or neighborhood. Despite the challenges that we face, the future of First Step is looking bright and it is our hope that you will continue to take a stand against violence by speaking up, getting involved, and joining our First Step family if you have not already done so. I thank you for your compassion and energy to help us stop the violence and support the courageous survivors who reach out and trust us at the most vulnerable time in their lives.

Sincerely,
Amy Youngquist, Chief Executive Officer
FIRST STEP PROGRAMS & SERVICES

Here is information about the work of First Step as well as a list of the services we provide each and every day.

Since 1978, First Step has been working for peaceful families and safe communities in Wayne County, Michigan. First Step is the only non-profit agency in out-Wayne County providing comprehensive services for victims of domestic and sexual violence.

First Step provides free and confidential programs designed to help survivors of violence overcome the lack of intervention and support, the feelings of powerlessness, isolation, physical danger and fear, and the financial, emotional and cultural barriers that victims of violence often face when seeking help.

WHAT MAKES FIRST STEP STAND OUT FROM OTHER COUNSELING PROGRAMS AND SHELTERS?

First Step staff members and volunteers are specially trained to assist and empower survivors of domestic violence, dating violence and sexual assault. First Step staff and volunteers are skilled experts in domestic violence, sexual assault, and trauma. They know the laws, have knowledge and experience with the dynamics of these crimes and understand the effects they have on the human spirit.

FIRST STEP’S MISSION:

THE MISSION OF FIRST STEP IS TO ELIMINATE BOTH DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND TO PROVIDE COMPREHENSIVE SERVICES TO INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES IMPACTED BY THESE CRIMES.

COMMUNITY EDUCATION

First Step believes that prevention is a key component to ending violence in our communities. First Step staff members present to schools, businesses, religious organizations, medical personnel, police officers, and civic groups. Topics range from the effects of violence on children, to dating violence, date rape drugs, domestic/sexual assault myths and facts, and community resources.

COMMUNITY/LEGAL RESPONSE PROJECT

First Step Community Response Project Survivor Advocates help victims who seek help in police departments and courts throughout Wayne County. In several communities, Survivor Advocates work with a designated domestic violence prosecutor and detective to respond to the crimes of domestic and sexual violence. Survivor Advocates contact the victims of these crimes just after the police report is filed. They focus on assessing lethality, making safety plans, and explaining the criminal justice process and the dynamics of domestic and sexual violence for the adults and children involved throughout the prosecution process. Referrals are also made to other First Step programs, as well as pertinent outside resources. In addition, First Step provides in-court victim advocacy and support through free legal clinics.

TEMPORARY EMERGENCY HOUSING (SHELTER)

When home is no longer a safe option, First Step provides emergency, short-term housing for victims of domestic and/or sexual violence and their children. Family Advocates work with residents to assist them in meeting their goals. Residents have the opportunity to participate in vital services, such as individual and group counseling, safety planning, medical attention, housing referrals, and educational and recreational activities for children.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT ADVOCACY PROGRAMS

Individuals and families who live in the community have the opportunity to participate in one-on-one counseling and support groups. Survivors of domestic and sexual violence learn about the dynamics of abuse and how to advocate for their own resources and needs. They are given the space to discuss the emotional impact of their situations. Groups allow survivors to share their stories and find strength in connecting with others, who sometimes become life-long friends. Nonresidential sessions are available in four sites: Plymouth, Wayne, Lincoln Park, and Redford.

INFORMATION AND REFERRALS

Providing critical information and referrals regarding housing, legal assistance, counseling, temporary emergency housing, transportation, and health care is a large part of First Step’s work.

CHILDREN’S ADVOCACY AND PREVENTION PROGRAMS

Children ages 3 through 19 are provided individual, family, and group counseling sessions to overcome the effects of witnessing violence in the home and, in some cases, the effects of being victimized directly by physical or sexual abuse. First Step also recognizes the need for fun and recreation. Through volunteers and staff, First Step provides recreational activities such as field trips, craft activities, holiday celebrations, birthday parties and more for the children and adults in our program.

ASSAULT RESPONSE

First Step staff and volunteers, on-call 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, respond to victims of domestic/sexual violence at local emergency rooms, police stations, and schools. Survivors receive immediate crisis intervention, clothing, support, safety planning, and links to First Step and other vital services.

24-HOUR HELP LINE (1-888-453-5900)

The 24-hour help line is a core service at First Step. For many, it is literally a lifeline. Specially trained First Step staff and volunteers provide crisis intervention, support, information, and safety planning to survivors who call our 24-hour help line.

OTHER

First Step provides food, toys, clothing, birthday gifts, gift cards, books, school supplies, diapers, household goods, transportation and many of the other basic needs to help survivors in transition.

TRANSITIONAL HOUSING

The Transitional Housing Program provides full rent subsidy and support while helping survivors build a credit history and skills to obtain and maintain permanent housing.