

We want to share important information that directly affects survivors of domestic and sexual violence in Wayne County and across Michigan.

Like many organizations, [First Step](#) relies on funding from the **Victims of Crime Act (VOCA)** to provide critical, lifesaving services. These federal funds are **not taxpayer's dollars** — they come from fines and penalties paid by convicted criminals and make up almost 50% of our annual budget. Nearly 80% of which are our *staff's wages*.

### What's Happening with VOCA?

VOCA funding is **dropping nationally by 40%**. This is due to fewer deposits into the federal Crime Victims Fund. **Michigan's state FY2026 budget is still being decided.** As of August 26<sup>th</sup>, both the House and Senate's proposed budgets leave us a significant shortfall and until it is finalized, we do not know whether **there will be enough resources to offset the federal deficit.**

### What VOCA Supports at First Step:

- 24/7 crisis helpline and emergency response
- Shelter and housing support for survivors fleeing abuse
- Advocacy, counseling, and support groups for adults and children
- Legal and systems advocacy to help survivors find safety and justice

### Impact on First Step:

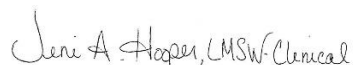
Nearly **half of our \$4.5 million** budget comes from VOCA. Cuts of this size put core services — like shelter, counseling, and advocacy — at serious risk. In preparation for these cuts and the unknown, First Step has already suspended critical services like transportation to shelter, medical appointments, and court and hoteling for high-risk clients after an assault.

### How You Can Help:

- **Support survivors directly** through [donations](#) — every dollar helps us keep doors open and services available.
- **Join us in raising awareness and [stay informed](#):** talk to friends, family, and community members about why survivor services matter and what is at [stake](#).
- Looking ahead, **consider attending this year's annual [You Are the Light Gala on October 17th](#)!** It's a chance to give back while enjoying a powerful evening of connection, celebration, and impact—all in support of survivors.

Thank you for standing with survivors. Together, we can make sure no one is left without help when they need it most.

With deep gratitude,



Jeni Hooper, LMSW  
Interim Executive Director of First Step

## WORKING TO END DOMESTIC & SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN WAYNE COUNTY

24-Hour Help Line:  
734.722.6800



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