



2025 ANNUAL REPORT

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.

www.firststep-mi.org



AGENCY WIDE

Since 1978, First Step has been working for peaceful families and safe communities in Wayne County, Michigan.

First Step is a non-profit agency providing comprehensive services for survivors 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.



In addition to the following programs, First Step also provides many of the basic needs to help survivors in transition, including:

- FOOD
- TOYS
- CLOTHING
- BIRTHDAY GIFTS
- GIFT CARDS
- BOOKS
- SCHOOL SUPPLIES
- DIAPERS
- HOUSEHOLD GOODS
- TRANSPORTATION



DIRECT SERVICES PROVIDED TO
4,620 SURVIVORS



FOR A TOTAL OF
5,612
HOURS OF SUPPORT

FEEDBACK FROM FIRST STEP SURVIVORS:

“Thank you so much for being there for me through this entire process. Your support, patience, and kindness made this difficult time feel manageable. You made me feel safe, comfortable, and not alone in court, and that means more to me than I can put into words. I’m truly grateful for you.”



REFERRALS TO
9,354
OUT-AGENCY SERVICES



SUPPORTED SURVIVORS IN
13
LANGUAGES

24-HR HELPLINE & CRISIS INTERVENTION

The 24-hour helpline 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 helpline.

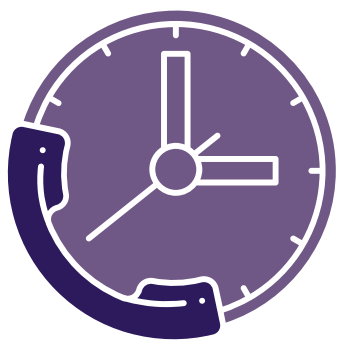


Non-fatal Strangulation Program

In August 2025, First Step partnered with **Avalon Healing** to launch a pilot to provide advocacy services to survivors of non-fatal strangulation in the cities of Canton, Westland, and Dearborn with the direct referrals of those respective police departments. Through the partnership, First Step has connected with survivors that may have otherwise not received safety planning or advocacy support services. The program will expand to other cities as capacity allows.



ANSWERED
8,740
HELPLINE CALLS



FOR A TOTAL OF
2,429
HOURS OF
CRISIS SUPPORT



“I have a long road ahead, and it’s going to be bumpy, but now I know I don’t have to traverse it alone.”



“You don’t know how much this means to me to finally have someone listen to me and help me feel safe for a moment. We need more advocates like you out here. Keep being amazing. Your hard work doesn’t go unnoticed. You’ve really built a safe talking space for me and I can’t thank you enough.”

EMERGENCY 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.

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 support, safety planning, medical attention, housing referrals, and educational and recreational activities for children.

The ARK (Animals Receiving Kindness) Building allows survivors to bring their pets into shelter.

The building features four dog kennels, four cat kennels, an outdoor dog run, four outdoor dog pens, a cat play area, a family visitation area, a laundry/storage area and a restroom. The ARK is an important resource to remove the barriers that keep survivors from leaving for fear that their pet will be harmed or killed as a result of the power and control that often occurs in domestic violence situations.



PROVIDED

11,629

SHELTER NIGHTS TO
SURVIVORS & CHILDREN

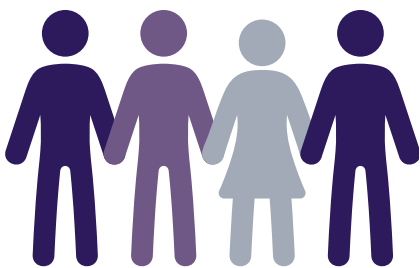


PROVIDED

1,076

PET SHELTER NIGHTS
IN THE ARK

“I can finally sleep tonight knowing I have a plan going forward.”



HOUSED

49

SURVIVORS



HOUSED

92

CHILDREN

COUNSELING & ADVOCACY

Individuals and families who live in the community have the opportunity to participate in one-on-one advocacy and/or 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.



“I thought I had to navigate all of this by myself.

I didn’t know people like you existed.”

“Thank you. Your support is helping me get clear that I’m making the right decision in leaving.”



EDUCATION & HEALING PROVIDED TO

2,101 & **118**
SURVIVORS CHILDREN

TRANSITIONAL SUPPORTIVE HOUSING (TSH)



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.

“I finally said it out loud, and the world didn’t end.”



“I didn’t think anyone would ever believe me. Thank you for believing, listening, and being in my corner.”



PROVIDED

8,443

SAFE NIGHTS TO

16

ADULTS

&

28

CHILDREN

COMMUNITY RESPONSE & LETHALITY ASSESSMENT PROGRAM (LAP)

First Step Community Response Project
Survivor Advocates help victims who are identified through 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 to support 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, we participate in Coordinated Community Response teams with other service providers, law enforcement, and the Wayne County Prosecutor’s Office.

First Step’s Lethality Assessment Program (LAP)
partners with local law enforcement to identify survivors at highest risk of intimate partner homicide and connect them to immediate support.

When responding to domestic violence incidents, participating officers assess for high-lethality factors, including strangulation, threats with a weapon, and intent to kill, connecting survivors to First Step’s 24-hour Helpline. On average, 50–55% of completed LAP screens indicate High Danger, underscoring the urgent need for crisis intervention, safety planning, and ongoing advocacy.

COMMUNITY RESPONSE PROJECT



LEGAL ADVOCACY
RENDERED TO
829
SURVIVORS



RENDERED PERSONAL
PROTECTIVE ORDER
SERVICES TO
511
SURVIVORS



ACCOMPANIED
232
SURVIVORS
TO COURT

“You treat me like a person, not a case.”

LETHALITY ASSESSMENT PROGRAM



PARTNERED WITH
5
LAW ENFORCEMENT
AGENCIES

CONDUCTED
629
LETHALITY
ASSESSMENTS

OF WHICH
63%
WERE
HIGH RISK

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

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, domestic/sexual assault myths and facts, and community resources.

First Step relies heavily on the kindness and generosity of our volunteers.



The mission of First Step's Volunteer Program is to provide the community with opportunities to support First Step's mission and increase our ability to deliver services at a higher capacity, standard, and efficiency than they do. Whether it's through working with survivors and their children, gardening, maintenance, event planning, cleaning, organizing, offering advisory, or consulting, all of our volunteers' efforts and time are valuable and appreciated.



FACILITATED OR
PARTICIPATED IN

83

TRAINING & EVENTS



REACHING
AND EDUCATING

5,290

ADULTS & CHILDREN

***“I have a therapist, but
First Step specializes in helping
me understand abuse.”***



SUPPORT FROM

287

VOLUNTEERS



FOR A COMBINED

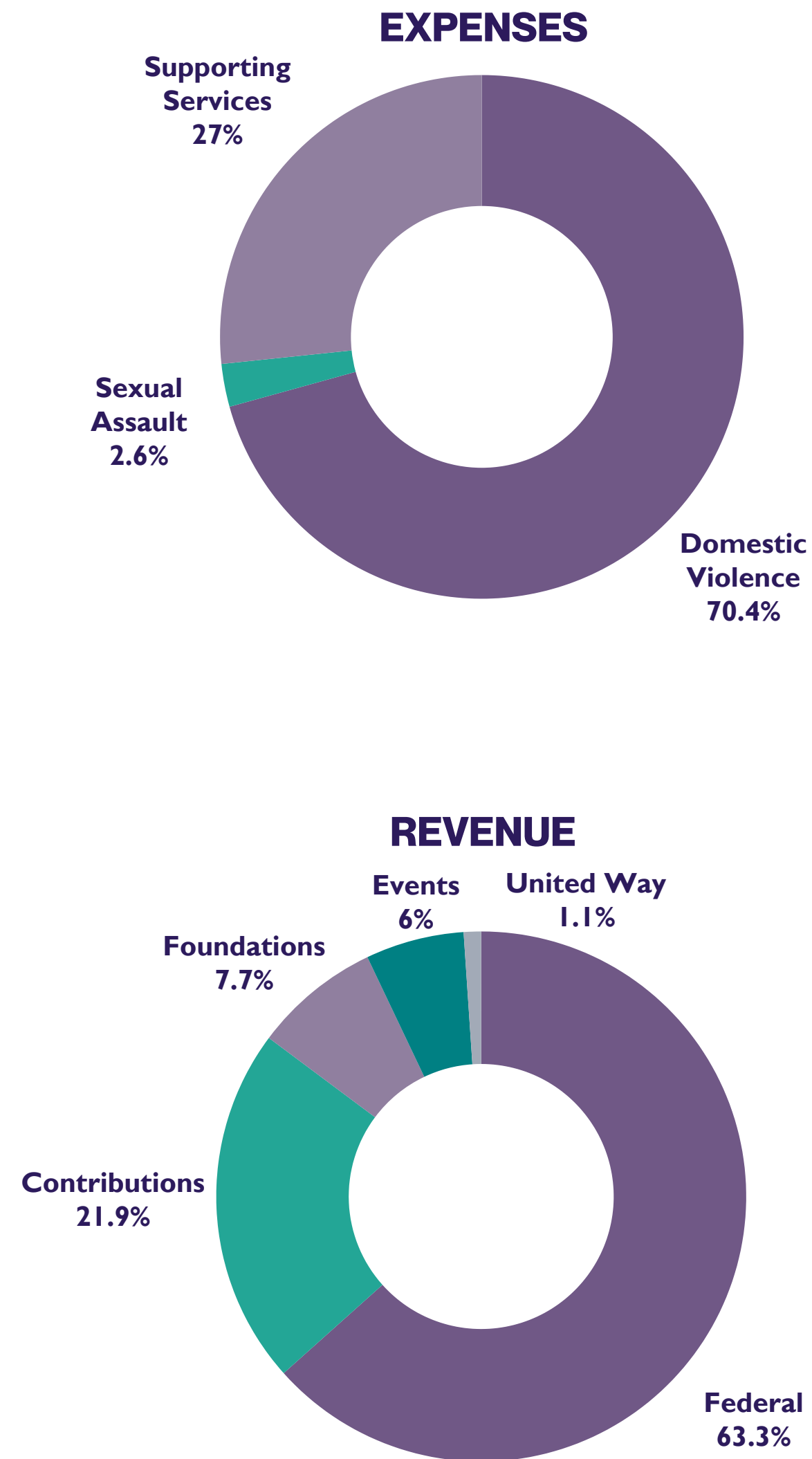
3,850

HOURS

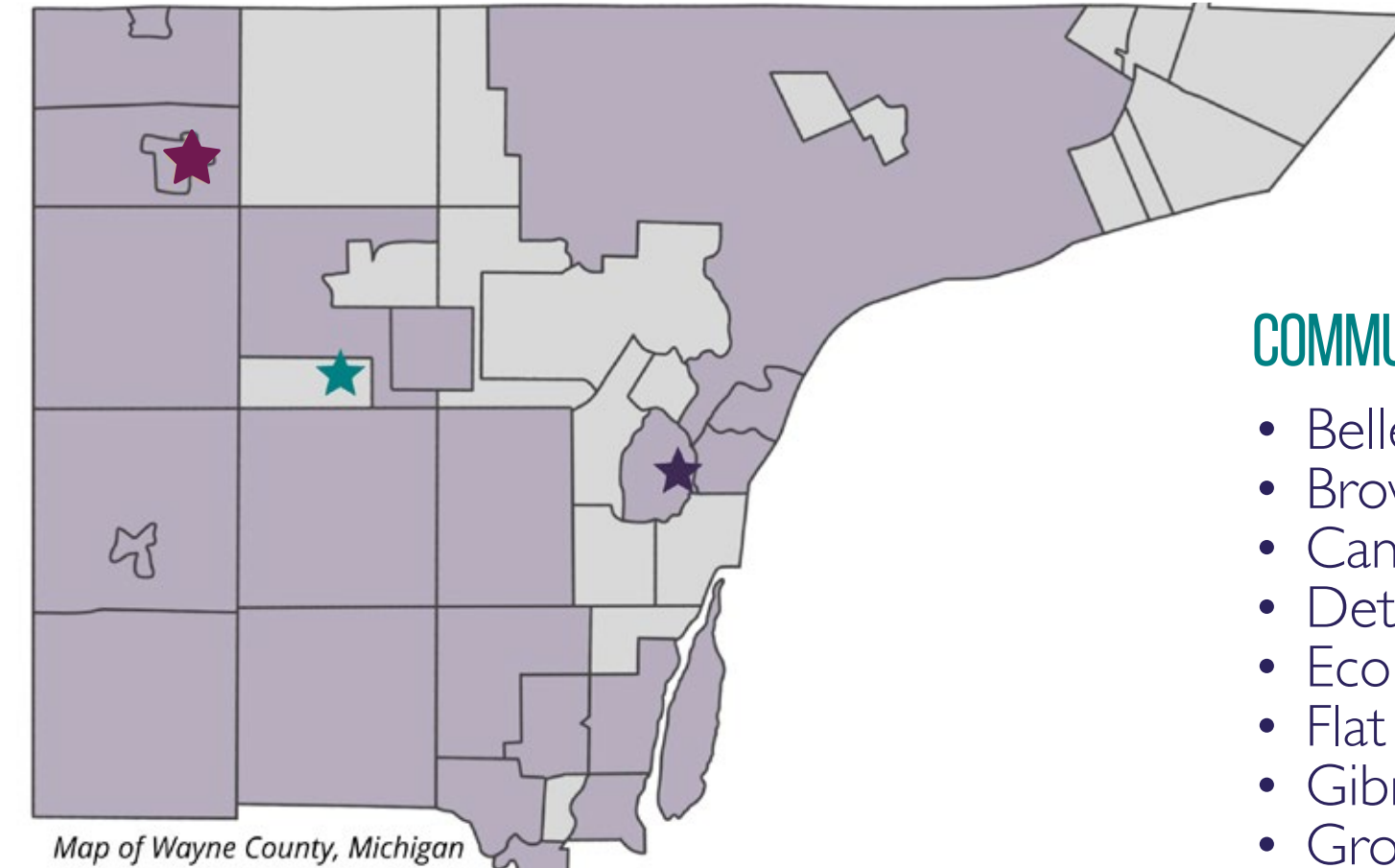
2025 EXPENSES & REVENUES



“You allow me to be a kid after everything that I’ve been through.”



OFFICE & RESPONSE SITES



Map of Wayne County, Michigan

■ = Community Response Advocate in community (C and/or PD)

COMMUNITY RESPONSE SITES

- Belleville (C)
- Brownstown Twp. (C)
- Canton Twp. (PD/C/LAP)
- Detroit (C)
- Ecorse (C)
- Flat Rock (C)
- Gibraltar (C)
- Grosse lie (C)
- Highland Park (PD/C)
- Huron Twp. (C)
- Inkster (PD/C)
- Lincoln Park (PD/C)
- Northville Twp. (PD/C)
- Northville (C)
- Plymouth (C)
- Plymouth Twp. (C)
- River Rouge (C)
- Rockwood (C)
- Romulus (PD/C)
- Sumpter (C)
- Taylor (PD/C/LAP)
- Trenton (C)
- Van Buren (C)
- Westland (PD/C)
- Woodhaven (C/PD)

★ First Step Administrative and Survivor Services

44567 Pinetree Drive
Plymouth, MI 48170
734.416.1111

★ Survivor Services Karen Wilson Smithbauer Family Center

4400 Venoy Road
Wayne, MI 48184
734.722.1772

★ Survivor Services Lincoln Park

Community Policing Building
1394 Cleophus Parkway
Lincoln Park, MI 48146
By appointment only

C=Court PD=Police Department
LAP=Lethality Assessment Program

For the most current list, please visit
firststep-mi.org/communityresponse