

February 16, 2026

Dear First Step Family,

I am deeply honored to share that I have officially stepped into the role of Executive Director at First Step, after serving as Interim since April.

This agency has been my professional home for more than a decade. I first walked through First Step's doors in 2014 as an intern in the Community Response Program. Since then, I have had the privilege of growing alongside this agency, serving as an advocate, a Program Coordinator, the Program Director of direct services, and most recently as Interim Executive Director. I have also been proud to provide licensing supervision for limited licensed social workers and ongoing mentorship for interns since 2018.

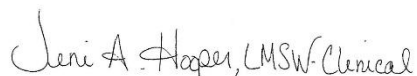
In addition to my work at First Step, I am a wife and a mom. My husband and I have been married for 20 years, and we share four children, most now grown, with our youngest wrapping up high school. We also have one dog and three cats who keep our home full of personality. I earned my Bachelor of Social Work from Eastern Michigan University and my Master of Social Work from the University of Michigan, and I became fully licensed as a clinical LMSW in 2018. When I'm not working, one of my favorite ways to recharge is by spending time at Renaissance and Celtic festivals, enjoying the music, history, and sense of community they bring.

Every piece of my journey here has been shaped by the courage of survivors and the dedication of the people who serve them. This work is deeply personal to me, and I carry forward the responsibility of this role with humility, gratitude, and unwavering commitment.

As Executive Director, my focus is steadfast: to ensure survivors who reach out to First Step are met with dignity, compassion, safety, and meaningful support, and that our staff and community partners have the tools and support they need to do this vital work well. I believe in leading with integrity, transparency, collaboration, and in honoring the voices and experiences of those we serve.

Thank you for your trust and for standing with First Step. I'm grateful to continue this journey with you as we stand together for survivors and our community.

With gratitude,



Jeni Hooper, LMSW-Clinical
Executive Director, First Step

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