



MAYOR  
**WILLIAM R. WILD**



CityofWestland.com

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## Westland Police Department Partners with First Step to Provide Advocate for Victims of Domestic Violence

**Westland, MI (April 30, 2021)** - In March of 2021, the Westland Police Department began a formalized partnership with First Step, to provide stronger, more immediate resources to victims of domestic violence.

Domestic violence cases are the most dangerous and difficult cases for officers to respond to and for victims to work through. Like many cities, Westland has seen a dramatic increase in domestic violence reported cases. This is especially true during the current high-stress environment caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2018, Westland Police Officers responded to 1174 domestic violence or family trouble calls. This number grew in 2019 to 1207, and then to 1337 in 2020.

"While these calls sometimes result with a person arrested and criminally charged (216 in 2018, 297 in 2019 and 331 in 2020), 2/3 of domestic violence cases are not prosecuted, often due to victims who are afraid of the process and the uncertainty of the outcomes," commented Police Chief, Jeff Jedrusik. "This is why it is so important for us to pursue a partnership with a trained and

certified victims advocate."

First Step is a non-profit agency that services individuals impacted by domestic and sexual violence in Wayne County. Their mission is to eliminate domestic and sexual violence by providing comprehensive support services to the families and communities impacted by these crimes. All of First Step's services are free, voluntary, and confidential. This means victims can opt in and out of services at any time. It also means victims have complete control over what information is shared outside the agency. Participating in prosecution is not required to receive services.

As a result of this strengthened partnership, the Westland Police Department now has a Community Response Survivor Advocate, Alexis Reed, present in the department to facilitate more immediate assistance to those impacted by domestic and sexual violence. Reed graduated with a Masters in Victimology and Criminal Justice, with a special interest in trauma response. She has worked with survivors of domestic and sexual violence for three years.

"Unfortunately, we have seen a spike in these types of cases during the COVID-19 pandemic and this partnership will be a great asset," commented Mayor William R. Wild. "It is also our hope, through this formal collaboration, the Westland community will know that these crimes are being taken seriously and there is support for victims at every stage of the process at no cost."

The Community Response Survivor Advocate provides support services for individuals identified as victims who are going through the criminal legal system including :

- o Providing information on the criminal legal process
- o Informing victims of their legal rights
- o Accompaniment to criminal court hearings
- o Safety planning
- o Assistance in completing petitions for Personal Protection Orders
- o Connection to other FS services and community resources

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Westland, Michigan is the state's 10<sup>th</sup> largest municipality, with a population of over 84,000.

Westland has been recognized as one of 24/7 Wall Street's America's Best 50 Cities to Live, offering residents and visitors an ideal blend of single – family affordable homes, apartments and condominiums, great schools, and access to numerous outdoor activities. Public safety is delivered by full-service, professional law enforcement and firefighting personnel.

Westland is well known as a premier destination for shopping and dining in Wayne County with hundreds of shops and restaurants anchored by the Westland shopping Center, one of the country's original four regional malls.

The City is served by two public school districts. Wayne-Westland Community Schools serving 12,000 youth was recently named one of the best schools in Michigan by WXYZ-TV and is the proud recipient of 14 Golden Apple and two Michigan Blue Ribbon Exemplary School Awards. Livonia Public Schools, educating nearly 15,000 students, is proud of their MEAP/MME scores that exceed State averages and the district has also earned Golden Apple and Michigan Blue Ribbon Exemplary School awards.

The City provides competitive incentives for those who are interested in investing in Westland, making it one of the hottest investment markets in the region. Westland's Fast-Track to Business Team, which consists of key decision makers who work diligently to "cut the red tape" and expedite the approval process for new business development.