ANNUAL REPORT 2025 – 2026

First Steps Housing Project Inc.

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first steps HOUSING PROJECT INC.

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TO OUR STAKEHOLDERS

Vision

Healthy Moms. Healthy Babies. Healthy Futures.

Mission Statement

First Steps, in partnership with the community, offers a supportive environment that enables young pregnant women and their babies to reach their full potential.

History

First Steps Housing Project Inc. was founded in Saint John to support vulnerable single women, children, and pregnant teens facing poverty. Led by Dr. Christine Davies, a steering committee secured funding across all government levels to prioritize necessities. In 2001, the organization purchased 120 Coburg Street from the Sisters of Charity and opened it as a haven on May 21, 2002.

Key Milestones (2003-2024)

- 2003: Launched the Second Steps Apartment Program to provide transitional housing for graduating residents.
- 2006: Established the Dr. Christine Davies Education Centre to help residents complete their high school education.
- 2008: Introduced a Mentoring Program to connect young mothers with community guidance.
- 2011: Added a Child Development Coordinator position to support infants' unique developmental needs.
- 2014: Partnered with SiMPACT Strategies on an $80,000 federally funded study, proving every $1 invested in First Steps yields roughly $6 in social value.
- 2017: Celebrated 15 years of operation, marking over 300 young mothers and babies supported since May 2002.
- 2020: Pivoted the education centre to remote and staggered learning during COVID-19 to keep student-mothers on track for graduation.
- 2021: Appointed Mallory Curwin as Executive Director to lead post-pandemic strategic updates.
- 2022: Launched the "Adopt a Room" Campaign with the Saint John Tool Library to renovate bedrooms in the 158-year-old facility.
- 2023: Secured federal Reaching Home funding to expand Second Steps, housing 58 clients transitioning out of homelessness.
- 2024: Formalized the licensed First Steps Early Learning facility and expanded childcare capacity by three spaces.

With over two decades of leadership, First Steps remains a highly respected champion, continuously evolving its programming to address modern gaps in support services.

President's Message

Dear Stakeholders,

As I reflect on another year at First Steps Housing, I am proud of our organization's progress. Each year brings new opportunities and learning experiences, demonstrating the vital importance of our community work.

First Steps is more than a place to live. We provide young women with a safe, supportive environment to build stronger futures for themselves and their children. Through education, parenting support, and life-skills development, we empower young mothers to complete high school and transition toward independent living.

The progress of the women we serve is at the heart of our mission. Every diploma earned, skill developed, and milestone reached represents a meaningful accomplishment. These successes reflect the deep commitment of our residents, staff, leadership, and community supporters.

Operationally, I continue to be impressed by the dedication of our Executive Director, Mallory, and our staff. Working in supportive housing brings unique challenges that require patience, flexibility, and sound decision-making.

Mallory leads with confidence and a strong spirit of collaboration. One of our core strengths is our leadership's willingness to draw upon the diverse experience of our Board members whenever needed. This team approach fosters mutual trust and brings together different perspectives to build a stronger organization.

Our Board continues to provide strategic guidance and support, while empowering our staff and Executive Director to manage daily operations.

Respectfully,

Brian Ferris

Brian Ferris
President, First Steps Board of Directors

Executive Director's Message

Dear Stakeholders,

Looking back on 2025–2026, the first word that comes to mind is growth.
We have grown in the number of women and children we support through First Steps, in our partnerships, and in the opportunities ahead. But some of the most meaningful growth cannot be captured in numbers. It is seeing a mother begin to believe in herself, a family move into their own home, a child reaches a new milestone, or a goal once thought impossible become a reality.

This has been an incredibly busy year, and I am grateful for the team that has carried this work forward. Our staff brings professionalism, knowledge, compassion, and heart to their work every day. The quality of First Steps reflects the people behind it, and I am incredibly proud of our team.

We have also celebrated Second Steps' continued growth, which has allowed us to walk alongside women as they build independence and create the future they want for their families.

There is something very special about being trusted to be part of a woman's journey through motherhood. We celebrate the milestones and successes, and we are there when things do not go according to plan. It is a privilege we never take for granted.

M. Curwin

Mallory Curwin
Executive Director, First Steps Housing Project Inc.

2025-2026 Board of Directors

Brian Ferris, President
Dr. Joanna Everett, Vice President
Jennifer Perkins, Secretary
Natalie Urquhart, Treasurer
Kate Zed, Director
Kennedy Forret, Director
Ross Galbraith, Director
Abigail Companion, Director
Rosann Edwards, Director
Maggie MacDonald, Director

Our Team

Front – left to right: Melissa Richardson (Second Steps Coordinator), Mallory Curwin (Executive Director), Sheila Curwin (Nutrition), Lori Logue (Programming & Outreach)

Back – left to right: Emma Stewart (Early Childhood Educator), Theresa Edwards (Early Childhood Educator), Shaylen Andrews (Child Development Coordinator), Karen Beshara-Vickers (Grants & Development), Denise Morais (Residential Director)
Missing: Jessica Finlay (Finance & Marketing)

Core Programs

- **First Steps Residency Program**: Provided housing for 24 different women and 18 children, with 7 healthy newborns welcomed into the home.

- **Second Steps Apartment Program**: Housed and supported 53 clients, including 21 adults and 32 children, in collaboration with partners like Outflow and Housing Alternatives.

- **Dr. Christine Davies Education Centre**: Nine women attended the center and graduated in June 2025. Two of the students continued their education at NBCC in the Personal Support Worker Program.

- **Early Learning Centre**
  - First Steps Early Learning Centre: The Centre continues to operate under its established Program Statement, which guides daily practices and reinforces its commitment to delivering high-quality early learning and childcare.

  - Expansion & Accessibility: Over the past year, we have strived to provide an inclusive and engaging environment. This aligns with broader efforts to improve access to affordable and inclusive childcare for families in the community.

  - Education & Philosophy: First Steps remains committed to providing interactive and developmentally appropriate learning experiences led by qualified educators. Programming continues to align with the New Brunswick Curriculum Framework and best practices in early childhood education.

  - Collaboration: The centre continues to collaborate with provincial, federal, and community partners to ensure programs and services remain responsive to the evolving needs of children, families, and the community.

First Steps
Early Learning Centre

Testimonials

Real stories. Real impact. Real change.

"I came back to First Steps in April 2024 after finally leaving a violent relationship with my son's dad. Honestly, I couldn't have done it without the support of the amazing people at First Steps. My ex had me convinced I couldn't take care of my son on my own, which made it really hard to leave. But once I got there, everything started to change. I found some incredible friends who really got me, and the staff are just the best. They helped me navigate some rough times, and I can't thank them enough."

– Caitlin

Counselling has played the biggest part in me being able to maintain my sobriety and continue to be the mom my son needs and deserves. It has helped me recognize my triggers so I can avoid and overcome them, and I honestly never would have known if I hadn't gone. I have always struggled to find someone to do therapy with, as it is extremely hard for me to develop connections during counselling, so in turn, I would never make it to my 3rd session. Karen is so reliable and understanding to the trauma I have experienced! I believe that Karen is an asset to the clients of First Steps, and the needs to continue to be available to the women."

– Anonymous

As we leave First Steps and begin this new chapter in our own home, I will carry everything you taught me with me. This place will always be a part of our story, and you will always be a part of our journey. Koda and I would not be where we are today without your love, patience, and belief in us. Thank you for walking beside me through my pregnancy, through becoming a mother, and through some of the hardest years of my life. Thank you for helping give Koda and me a future filled with stability, safety, and hope. We will never forget what you have done for us.

With all my love and gratitude.
– Brittney

Because of you, hope is possible.

SUPPORT
We listen.

EMPOWER
We encourage.

INSPIRE
We believe.

Stronger together. Brighter futures.

Outreach

First Steps extends its impact through strategic community engagement and support for families beyond their immediate residential programs:

- Supporting Newcomer Families: The organization has expanded its reach by providing support services specifically tailored to newcomer families within the community.
- Open Programming: To maximize resources, First Steps now opens its programs to partner agencies and, conversely, hosts three programs on-site delivered by community partners.
- Community Integration: Outreach initiatives include integrating children and mothers into the local community through activities like visits to the local library, community walks, and trips to the YMCA.
- Summer Engagement: First Steps held a Summer Camp as part of its seasonal outreach to provide structured support and engagement for families in the community.
- Collaborative Partnerships: Outreach is further strengthened by working with partners like Outflow to provide meals to the unhoused community through the H.O.N.E.S.T. program.

Partnering with **Sophia Recovery Centre** on **Pink Shirt Day**, we stood together to promote a kind, respectful, and inclusive community. Kindness never goes out of style!

Additional Programs

- **Mental Health Matters:** We offer free, one-on-one and group counseling with a licensed clinical therapist for women and families in our programs to help heal trauma and change life trajectories. To remove all barriers to care, we provide free childcare and round-trip transportation for every session.

- **M.O.M Program (Moms on the Move):** The Program is designed to offer structured outlets that can directly improve women's overall wellness, vital social connections, and cognitive function. The program has four components: physical fitness, mental health, resource gathering, and life skills.

- **Circle of Security:** A six-week course delivered by staff from F.A.C.E. (Family and Child Education) to help young mothers understand their baby's emotional cues and strengthen the mother-child bond.

- **Financial Literacy:** In partnership with Kaleidoscope, a three-week training was provided on managing finances, including topics like budgeting, interest rates, and credit scores.

- **Taking a Step Forward:** Counsellor Karen Dunham facilitated a six-session program that addressed how childhood trauma impacts adult life and provided skill-building for communication, healthy relationships, and coping.

- **H.O.N.E.S.T Program (Helping Our Neighbours Eat Supper Tonight)**: A program that helps women gain cooking skills, earn school credits, and provides meals to the unhoused community.

- **Inspiration Exchange:** A mentorship program that pairs young mothers in transition with supportive community women. This initiative helps participants build self-confidence, reduce isolation, and develop vital parenting and life skills for independent living.

- **Helping Hands:** A community initiative run by First Steps that connects local volunteers with neighbours needing everyday assistance.

- **Dad Program:** Addressing a gap in community resources, First Steps launched a dedicated program to provide young fathers with parenting education and peer connections.

Community Partners

Jenna's Impact Story

I first came to First Steps in November 2025. I was 23 years old and 38 weeks pregnant. At the time, my partner and I were homeless and living in a tent. Things weren't always that way, though. At one point, I had an apartment and was raising our first daughter, Scarlett. By the time she turned six months old, CPS got involved, and she was placed with family. We continued to struggle and lost our housing.

Growing up, I spent my childhood in foster care and group homes, so I know firsthand how important it is to keep family together. That is exactly what I'm working on.

Since coming to First Steps, I gave birth to a healthy baby girl, Alaya. While I've been here, my partner has been working on himself and his recovery. I've also made some great friends at First Steps. Even though some have already moved on to the next chapter of their lives, I really hope we can keep in touch.

I've been taking advantage of everything First Steps offers. I have participated in Circle of Security, Healthy Relationships, and I meet with the Child Development Coordinator regularly to make sure Alaya is hitting her milestones. I also have regular on-site counselling with a licensed clinical therapist to process everything.
I've also been attending Celebrate Recovery in the community.

Additionally, First Steps is supporting me with my reunification with Scarlett. We now have more visitation time, and she is feeling much more comfortable in her new surroundings.

My main goal is to move into Second Steps so I can parent both of my children. On top of that, I'm also optimistic that I can return to high school to finish my education!

Bayview KENWORTH

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We Are Looking For Female Volunteers To Help With Childcare

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Contact Shaylen If You Are Interested

Shaylen@FirstStepsNB.com

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