



UCF

RESTORES

LIVES + FAMILIES + COMMUNITIES

UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

Restoring Hope



A LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

During another turbulent year in what has become a “new normal,” UCF RESTORES® continued to serve as an essential resource to Central Florida and the nation. We expanded our scope of work to reach even more people in need and were invited to collaborate in improving mental health for those affected by trauma in health care, federal law enforcement and county governments.

Many of the issues that these communities face are not new to us, and we are honored to continue changing the way that posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is understood and treated. These efforts were championed by a dear friend, partner and benefactor, James “Jim” Rosengren, who passed away in March 2022. A retired combat medic, he was devoted to veterans and first responders and always stepped forward when someone was in need – a value we hold near to our mission.

As a recipient of a First Responder Regional Support Grant from the Florida Department of Children and Families, our center hosted the first of three Strategic Planning Summits with leaders from first responder agencies. The first summit brought together leaders from Orange, Osceola, Seminole and Brevard counties. In the coming year, we will host two additional summits within our 12-county region to establish and improve access to behavioral health resources. At this first summit, we recognized the additional need to support first responder families and retirees as well as current first responders. This includes expanding our lifesaving peer support REACT training and providing a framework for meaningful mental wellness support in the years ahead.

Another piece of the puzzle is ensuring clinician cultural competency. We often hear from first responders that clinicians do not “get” them or understand their unique culture. As the mental health partner for the Florida Firefighters Safety & Health Collaborative, we are increasing the number of clinicians who are culturally competent to work with members of the fire service and their families. Collaboration with the National Policing Institute will allow a new course on law enforcement cultural competence as well. Our goal is for clinicians to understand the unique cultures that define these occupations and be better prepared to provide appropriate treatment. The ultimate aim is to make these trainings available as web courses, allowing UCF RESTORES to educate a national network of certified clinicians who can provide the lifesaving support that first responders, retirees, and their families deserve.

All of these are examples of efforts not only to aid in trauma treatment, but also to prepare communities to be more resilient – both before and after a traumatic event. In the meantime, we’ll keep working to restore hope for a better tomorrow.

Deborah C. Beidel, Ph.D., ABPP

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Trustee Chair and Pegasus Professor

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(L-R) Battalion Chief Chris Bator, Coral Springs-Parkland Fire Department; Dr. Deborah Beidel, UCF RESTORES; Lieutenant Jeff Orrange, Orlando Fire Department; Dr. David Rozek, UCF RESTORES; Lieutenant Kandice Oltz, Coral Springs-Parkland Fire Department

CRITICAL INCIDENT SUPPORT

Surfside Florida

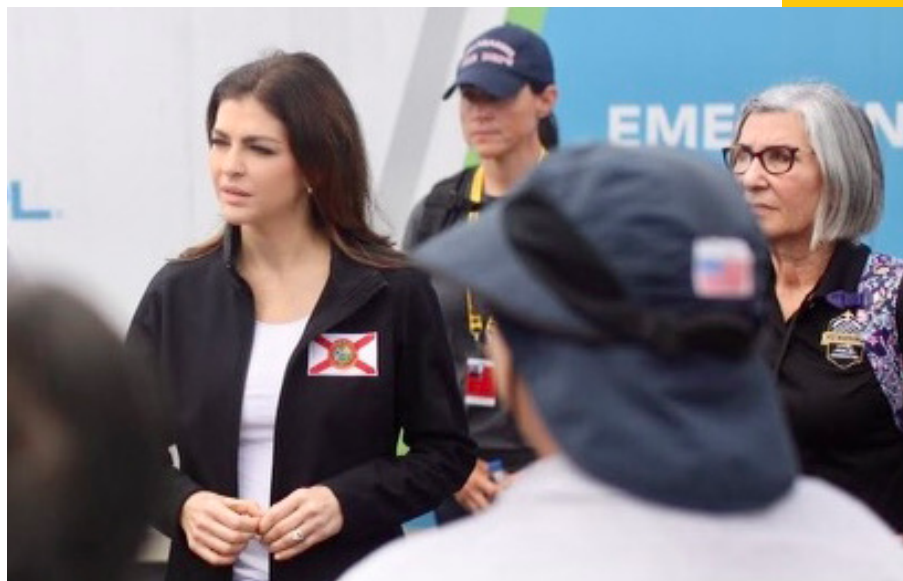
Having mobilized to South Florida following the 2021 Surfside condominium building collapse, UCF RESTORES provided psychological first aid to survivors and first responders who were on the pile of rubble, which was all that remained of the tower.

Our team was on-site for a week and provided debriefings with all eight state task forces of the Urban Search and Recovery (USAR) Teams in attendance. A year after the collapse, the UCF RESTORES team continues to help first responders, survivors, and their families find recovery and healing from the trauma of this critical incident.

In 2022, Florida's chief financial officer and state fire marshal, Jimmy Patronis, honored Central Florida's Task Force Four for its

service and sacrifice during the Surfside Tragedy during his "Year of the USAR" tour.

Even the most experienced first responders at Surfside had never dealt with such intense circumstances, so in collaboration with the Florida Firefighters Safety & Health Collaborative, 2nd Alarm Project, and Florida State Fire Marshals, we created a support tool to help first responders cope with the Surfside anniversary and other anniversaries of traumatic events.



(L-R) Florida First Lady Casey DeSantis; Dr. Kellie O'Dare, Florida A&M University; Dr. Deborah Beidel, UCF RESTORES



Virtual reality scenario created for the Virtual Reality Clinical Trial

FUNDING

Virtual Reality Clinical Trial

Virtual reality (VR) has long been part of treatment at UCF RESTORES, but \$3 million in funding awarded from the U.S. Department of Defense allowed the team to develop a VR tool to address a wider range of traumatic events and strengthen treatment. In the past, clinicians relied on a third-party system with limited scenarios, but the new system allows for customized scenarios for military, first responders, health care workers, and civilians, specific to each patient's unique experience.

Exposure therapy with VR is most effective when the scenario presented includes as many sensory details as possible to match a patient's traumatic event. This allows the patient to feel fully immersed in the sights, sounds, and smells of a critical incident.

The team recently concluded a clinical trial aimed at testing the efficacy of this new VR system in a condensed and intensive two-week program. The clinical trial included patients 18 years or older who

met the diagnostic criteria for PTSD, and results from the trial will be available in late 2022.

First Responder Regional Support Grant

In June 2022, UCF RESTORES was awarded a \$1.4 million First Responder Regional Support Grant from the Florida Department of Children and Families to expand its nationally recognized REACT (Recognize. Evaluate. Advocate. Coordinate. Track.) peer support and suicide prevention training for first responders in a 12-county region in Central Florida. This award established UCF RESTORES as a Regional Support Center and enabled the team to reach an underserved population at a higher risk for being exposed to life-altering trauma.

UCF RESTORES focused on three essential areas to support first responders, as well as their family members, which included:

1. Providing peer-support training focused on mental health and suicide prevention to train an additional 300 first responders across the region.
2. Developing a large network of clinicians and providing free training on first responder



(L-R) Dr. David Rozek, UCF RESTORES; Lieutenant Claudia Fernandez, Orange County Fire Rescue; Lieutenant Rodrigue Thomas, Orange County Fire Rescue; Captain Daniel Buchanan, Orange County Fire Rescue; Clinician Robin Cooper, UCF RESTORES

culture and treatments to expand first responders' access to well-trained and culturally competent clinicians in their area.

3. Hosting Strategic Planning Summits to assist first responder agencies in developing behavioral health access plans (BHAPs) suitable for their departments.

The goal of the Regional Support Center is to build a comprehensive and sustainable system to serve as a model for first responder support across the state. With a focus on access to training programs and resources both within and outside of first responder agencies, UCF RESTORES hopes to lower the risk of suicide and build resiliency in our first responders.

Central Florida Cares

Thanks to funding support from the Department of Children and Families alongside the Central Florida Cares Health System, our team was able to provide training to clinicians, medical professionals, first responders, and others on suicide prevention and intervention locally and around the Central Florida region.

In May 2022, Dr. David Rozek, Director of the National Center of Excellence for First Responder Behavioral Health at UCF RESTORES, partnered with the Orange County Fire Rescue Department to hold a mental health awareness training for ~1,200 firefighters and personnel. This training provided foundational knowledge to the whole department on common behavioral health issues in firefighting and resources to support the department. These partnerships furthered the development of training and resiliency programs in our first responder communities.

Clinical Treatment Supported by State Funding

In the 2021-22 fiscal year alone, UCF RESTORES provided no-cost services valued at more than \$577,428. Our treatment programs continued through the generous support of state legislative funding to help meet critical operational needs. We would like to thank State Representative David Smith and State Senator Tom Wright for their support of this year's legislative budget request for \$515,000, to allow us to continue to offer our services at no cost to Floridians who have been impacted by traumatic events.

HEALTH CARE SUPPORT

Frontline health care workers have been heroic during the COVID-19 pandemic, often working longer shifts and risking their own health and safety. Their support came at a cost, however, with stress injuries and exposure to prolonged trauma that created lasting emotional impacts. Health care is an occupation with a higher likelihood of being exposed to trauma, and ensuring these communities are supported as they navigate the mental health repercussions has been one of our main areas of focus.

A new position created in February 2022 allowed us to connect with the local medical community to familiarize personnel with UCF RESTORES and create a peer support REACT (Recognize. Evaluate. Advocate. Coordinate. Track.) training specifically for their industry. Caylee Neisler, our first medical outreach coordinator, joined us after working as a registered nurse for over a decade. From her own experience on the Neonatal Rapid Response Team and the Neonatal/Pediatric Critical Care Flight Team at AdventHealth, plus growing up in a family of nurses and first responders, Caylee knows firsthand the toll this work can take on mental health.

At UCF RESTORES, she leads the effort to help our health care heroes understand the issues and

stressors associated with their jobs and bring awareness to our REACT training program. This proven program has allowed us to create an active peer support network for firefighters and law enforcement, and we are excited to continue building a stronger, more connected and compassionate first responder community that extends to health care workers.

2021 Pabst Steinmetz Foundation Arts and Wellness Innovation Awards

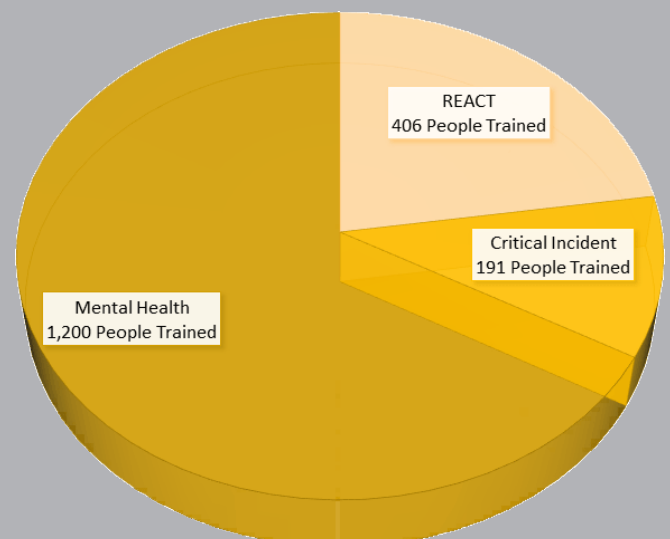
Founded in 2018 by Central Florida's Pabst Steinmetz Foundation to recognize cross-disciplinary teams building sustainable models for arts and wellness innovation, this award provided \$25,000 in funding to devise a new peer support program with integration of comic (graphic novel) workshops. Combined with a new peer support training built on the successful model of UCF RESTORES' REACT training, this initiative draws on the established movement of graphic medicine and comic therapy as a powerful and unique way to communicate nurses' mental stress experiences and strategies for supportive resilience. Led by UCF's Writing and Rhetoric Faculty and Nursing Specialists in their first interdisciplinary collaborative with UCF RESTORES, this program is designed to support the mental well-being and resilience of hospital nurses and, by extension, better enable them to provide high-quality care to their patients.

Patients Seen: Total through June 2022

- Veterans/Active-Duty Personnel: 517
- First Responders (Dispatchers, Firefighters, EMT/Paramedics, Law Enforcement Officers (LEO), LEO Support Staff): 661

People Trained: July 2021 through June 2022

- 1,797



ADVOCACY & ACCOLADES

Informing and building a network of support within the communities we serve is a top priority. UCF RESTORES supports education and advocacy opportunities year-round in an effort to reach different audiences from families, first responders, legislators, students and health care personnel. This year, the UCF RESTORES team collaborated with a range of organizations to share 35 presentations on topics ranging from managing stress and trauma to crisis response planning to the Surfside building collapse. These included:

- A collaboration with the Florida Firefighters Safety & Health Collaborative (FFSHC) to present at the Florida Fire Chief's Conference;
- Presenting on "Managing stress as a communicator in the wake of COVID-19" at the 2021 Florida Public Relations Association Annual Conference;
- Sharing information about UCF RESTORES' programs as the November 2021 charity partner at the Contractors, Closers & Connections of Orlando;
- Reaching out to first responder spouses about life "After the Trauma" with the FFSHC First Responder Family and Caregiver Connection initiative; and,
- Informing the attendees of the Central Florida Cares Better Together Symposium about the extent of our services "Helping the Heroes: Everyday Traumas, Mass Shootings, and a Building Collapse."

Appointment Totals: July 2021 through June 2022

- Single Session Consultation: 57 Appointments at 56.25 Hours
- Group: 61 Appointments at 87.75 Hours
- Individual: 1,800 Appointments at 2,689 Hours
- Total: 1,918 Appointments at 2,833 Hours
- Monetary Value: \$577,428

Osceola County Sheriff's Office Award

In October 2021, Dr. Deborah Beidel was recognized – alongside Osceola County Fire Rescue and EMS, St. Cloud Police Department, and Kissimmee Police Department – by the men and women of the Osceola County Sheriff's Office for UCF RESTORES' provision of emotional and operational support during the department's recent time of need.



(L-R) Dr. Deborah Beidel, UCF RESTORES; Sheriff Marcos Lopez, Osceola County Sheriff's Office

Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office Citizen's Award

Our suicide prevention expert, Dr. David Rozek, was recognized in March 2022 with a Citizen's Award by the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office for his work in collaboration with Dr. Allison Agliata on a program developed to help 911 dispatchers learn more about suicide to provide tangible skills for how to support callers who are high risk for suicide.



(L-R) Sheriff Chad Chronister, Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office; Dr. David Rozek, UCF RESTORES

FOR MORE
INFORMATION

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