



**UCF**

**RESTORES<sup>®</sup>**

LIVES ♦ FAMILIES ♦ COMMUNITIES

UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

**ANNUAL REPORT 2023**

*Restoring  
Hope*



# Table of Contents

- 2 | A LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
- 3 | IMPACT SUMMARY: OUR 2023 AT-A-GLANCE
- 5 | TREATMENT
- 7 | PEER SUPPORT
- 10 | TRAINING
- 15 | CRITICAL INCIDENT RESPONSE
- 17 | PARTNERSHIPS
- 19 | AWARENESS AND ADVOCACY
- 21 | FUNDING AND SUPPORT

# A LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

UCF RESTORES entered 2024 on the heels of another groundbreaking year, marked by continued innovation and shared successes. With the support of our partners, donors, and advocates, we have seen great advancements in our ongoing charge to restore hope and healing to those affected by trauma.

We were proud to launch a reimagined version of our highly successful Redline Rescue™ platform – a modernized system designed to connect fire service personnel with trained peer supporters. We also introduced the all-new Blueline Rescue™ platform, which adapts our proven model to support Florida's law enforcement personnel, providing them the tools they need to address the trauma they encounter on the job. With Goldline Rescue™ for dispatchers now also live at time of publishing, we're excited for the future of our growing, comprehensive peer support app network – a first of its kind for public safety first responders.

Backing this network are two key groups that make the Rescue apps possible: dedicated peer supporters and mental health clinicians who have risen to the call of helping others in need. We are honored to play a role in equipping both groups with the tools they require to succeed in their work through our peer support and cultural competency training programs. In 2023 alone, we trained more than 800 peer supporters and more than 200 clinicians in their respective areas.

Our work also includes a strong focus on the incorporation of cutting-edge technology designed to address the challenges commonly associated with trauma care. Furthering this focus is a new partnership between UCF RESTORES and Terasynth – a leading MS&T and Artificial Intelligence firm – through which our proprietary VR treatment tool will be further developed. The tool already shows early promise; this past year, we were pleased to report that 100% of participants in a limited-subject clinical trial no longer met the diagnostic criteria for PTSD after

just 14 days. We are very optimistic for the potential of this innovative system, and we look forward to seeing its impact deepen over the years to come.

At the core of all our efforts is the shared mission of restoring hope to the lives, families, and communities of those who have suffered from trauma. We continue to work tirelessly to develop the best possible treatment methods, with results superior to national first-line treatment outcomes. And, for those who cannot make it to our clinic in Orlando, we continue to use the internet and telehealth to deliver evidence based treatment and facilitate support.

We are deeply grateful to our faculty and staff, collaborators, Florida legislators, and private donors for their ongoing support, which made all of these accomplishments possible. We invite you to explore our annual report in full, which details our efforts and achievements further.

Thank you for supporting us and for contributing to our mission. Together, we are helping communities across the nation move beyond trauma and find healing.

Sincerely,



Deborah C. Beidel, Ph.D., ABPP  
Executive Director of UCF RESTORES



# Impact Summary

## OUR 2023 AT-A-GLANCE

### Treatment

Our clinicians provided **life-saving treatment** to more than **250 individuals** through a total of **2,405 appointments** – or 3,493 hours of treatment support – **valued at \$703,748**.

These efforts bring our to-date treatment totals to: **500+ veterans, 950+ first responders, and 1,670+ total individuals** served.

The results of a limited-subject clinical trial testing the first iteration of our proprietary **VR treatment tool** were released in 2023: **100% of participants** no longer met the diagnostic criteria for PTSD following just **14 days** of treatment.

### Peer Support

The 2023 modernization of **RedlineRescue.org** saw **394,000 total site hits**. To date, a total of **216** peer support providers + **81** culturally competent clinicians are registered with the platform.

The launch of **BluelineRescue.org** in Q3 2023 garnered **73,000 total site hits** – with **32** peer support providers + **37** culturally competent clinicians registered – before the year's end.

With **GoldlineRescue.org** for dispatchers also introduced at the time of writing, UCF RESTORES is proud to have introduced the **first and only** peer support network for public safety first responders.

### Awareness & Advocacy

In 2023, our team delivered **344 total presentations, training sessions and outreach initiatives** across the calendar year. In total, we invested **1,440 hours** in community awareness efforts, reaching **7,069 individuals**.



# Training

UCF RESTORES hosted over **60 REACT peer support trainings** for more than **700 first responders** in 2023. The program has reached over **2,000 participants** across **200 agencies** to date.

Survey feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, and participants have reported using their peer support skills with an average of **26 peers per month** and providing referrals for additional services to an average of **13 peers per month**.

UCF RESTORES reached **60 healthcare professionals with Medical REACT** since its launch in Aug. 2023.

UCF RESTORES' **Cultural Competency Training programs** equipped over **210 clinicians** with the knowledge and skills to provide culturally sensitive care to firefighters and law enforcement personnel.

Additionally, the UCF RESTORES Trauma Management Therapy Online Training program reached a **200-to-date clinician milestone**.

# Critical Incident Response

As an integral part of Florida's State Emergency Response Plan (SERP), UCF RESTORES was actively deployed as a crucial component of the **Hurricane Idalia Mental Wellness Incident Management Team**, coordinating mental wellness services for affected counties.

In 2023, our team also hosted **three critical incident debriefings** for first responder agencies in Sanford, Titusville, and Cape Canaveral.



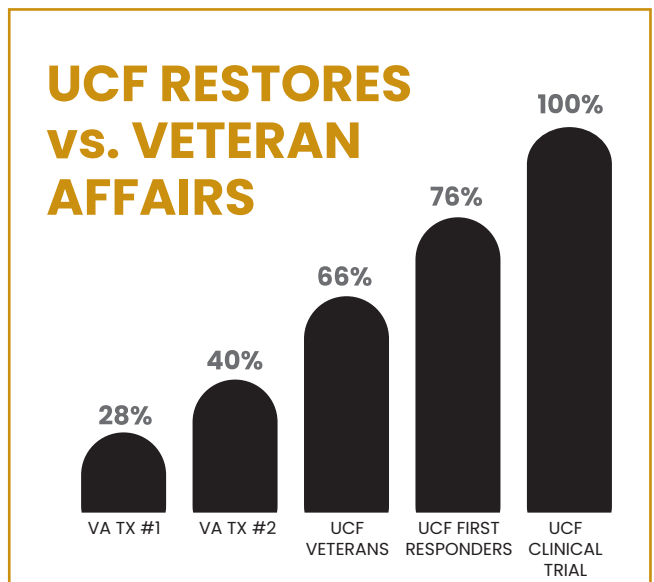
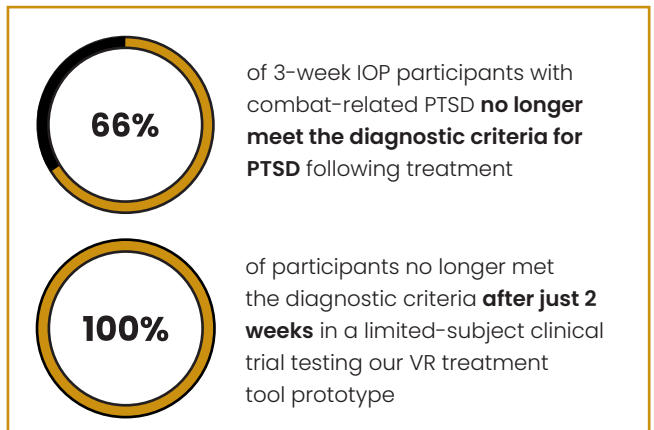
Treatment

# Breaking Boundaries with Virtual Reality (VR)

In 2023, our team continued blazing trails in the field of PTSD treatment, leveraging our one-of-a-kind VR-assisted exposure therapy treatment to produce results superior to national first-line outcomes.

In February, we released the results of a limited-subject clinical trial testing both the efficacy of our proprietary virtual reality treatment system and further condensation of our hallmark Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP) – reducing the length of required patient participation from three to two weeks. The trial was immensely successful, with **100%** of participants no longer meeting the diagnostic criteria for PTSD following just **14 days** of treatment.

These results hold immense promise for the future of our IOP approach and for the advancement of PTSD treatment with the use of our proprietary tool.



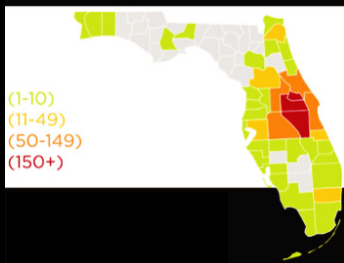
% of patients who no longer have PTSD after a course of treatment at the VA vs. UCF RESTORES

We will continue leveraging and developing our VR tool and, going forward, deliver the two-week IOP treatment program as our signature offering.

Beyond the realm of this promising clinical trial, our team successfully delivered on its charge of helping others heal in the wake of trauma through delivery of our IOP, traditional outpatient, and single-session consultation programs. In 2023 alone, UCF RESTORES clinicians provided life-saving treatment to more than 250 individuals through a total of 2,405 individual appointments – or 3,493 hours of treatment support – valued at \$703,748.

## IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS

Florida Patients Served by County



TO DATE

**500+** total veterans treated  
**950+** total first responders treated  
**1,670+** total individuals treated

IN 2023

**2,400+** no-cost appointments completed  
**\$700k+** value of services rendered

## Why Virtual Reality?

Virtual reality (VR) has proven to be a crucial tool in the treatment of PTSD. When an individual experiences a traumatic event, any cues from the event become embedded in the brain's trauma memory. For example, in the case of a dog attack, if the owner was wearing a red shirt, the color red may now become a cue for danger for the person attacked. Going forward, seeing the color red anywhere – regardless of context – can incite panic, fear, nightmares, and other symptoms. In this case, exposure therapy would involve placing that person in contact with red objects so their brain learns that "red" does not always mean danger.

But what do we do when a survivor's fear involves an event that cannot be recreated in real life, like an IED explosion, sexual assault, or a mass shooting? When their cues involve the smell of roadside trash, whiskey, or human blood?

This is where VR comes in – VR allows for the re-creation of sights, sounds, and smells of any traumatic event, re-introducing trauma survivors to their unique cues in a controlled fashion. UCF RESTORES has prioritized the development of our own VR technology to ensure our center's approaches remain at the forefront of PTSD treatment.



Peer  
Support

# Eliminating Barriers Through Innovation

## The Reinvention of Redline Rescue™

In January 2023 – with support from a First Responder Regional Support Grant from the Florida Department of Children and Families – UCF RESTORES launched an all-new, modernized version of [Redline Rescue](#), a powerful peer support system designed specifically for firefighters and their families. Redline Rescue is a first-of-its-kind peer support platform for firefighters and the first solution in what is now a growing network of web-based peer support solutions from UCF RESTORES.

Redline Rescue was designed to take peer support to a new level. Leveraging a statewide network of firefighters

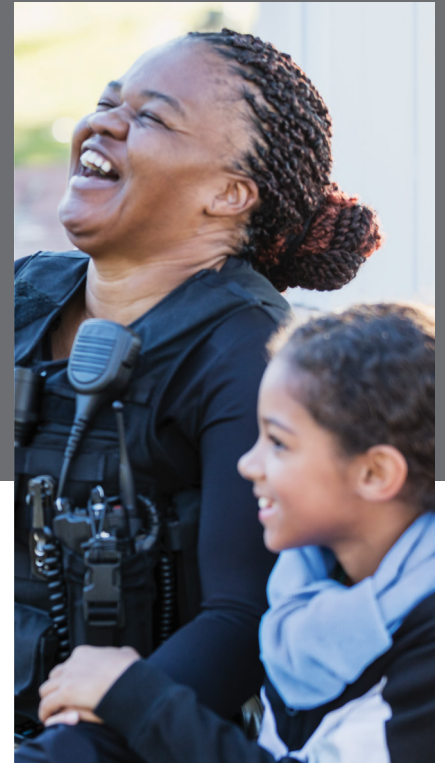
trained in peer support, the model connects firefighters directly with empathic peers – factoring in rank, level of experience and lifestyle components – to provide struggling first responders with immediate and effective support for anxiety and other distressing symptoms that often accompany exposure to traumatic events. The platform also connects firefighters in need with licensed mental health clinicians trained in firefighter cultural competency by UCF RESTORES, ensuring they're well-equipped to deal with the unique challenges, lifestyle, and lingo of fire service culture.



# Introducing Blueline Rescue™

Building on the success of Redline Rescue, UCF RESTORES launched [Blueline Rescue](#) in August 2023 – a platform similar in design to its Redline predecessor, but created specifically for law enforcement personnel. The Blueline Rescue system provides users – including personnel and their families – immediate and confidential access to qualified peers trained through either UCF RESTORES’ REACT peer support training program or the Nova Southeastern University Peers as Law Enforcement Support (PALS) training program, as well as licensed mental health clinicians trained through the UCF RESTORES Law Enforcement Cultural Competency Training Program.

Blueline Rescue is backed by funding from The Center for Law Enforcement Technology, Training & Research and a grant from the State of Florida Department of Children and Families (LH843).



## RESCUE APP GROWTH & IMPACT

### REDLINE RESCUE

**394k**

*Total site hits in 2023*

**216**

*Total peer support providers registered as of Dec. 31, 2023*

**81**

*clinicians registered with Redline Rescue as of Dec. 31, 2023*

### BLUELINE RESCUE

**73k**

*Total site hits in 2023*

**32**

*Total peer support providers registered as of Dec. 31, 2023*

**37**

*clinicians registered with Blueline Rescue as of Dec. 31, 2023*



At UCF RESTORES, we are dedicated to supporting our first responders and trauma survivors by cultivating a community of empathetic peers and expert clinicians. As of writing, we have also introduced a new Rescue Line solution for emergency dispatchers – [Goldline Rescue](#) – and are exploring similar avenues to deepen our support of the first responder community.

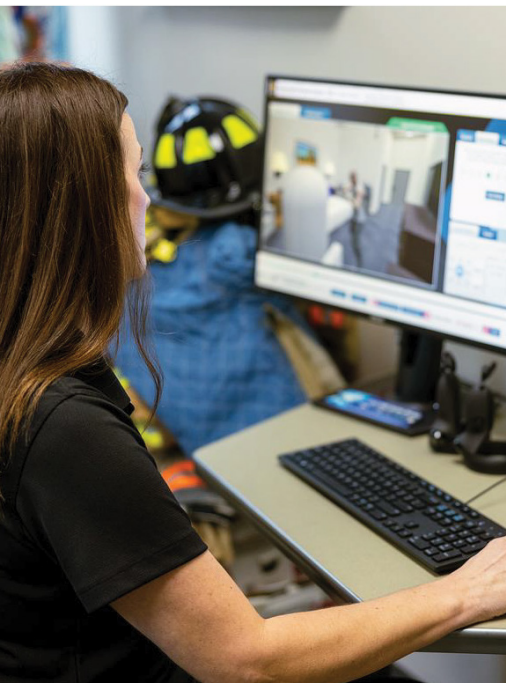
UCF RESTORES is proud to have developed the first and only comprehensive peer support network for public safety first responders, and we are grateful to our partners for making this work possible. Moving forward, we will continue harnessing the power of technology and developing new, innovative approaches to ease access to proven resources and treatment for those in need.





# Reducing Stigma, Enhancing Accessibility

In today's world, trauma and its ripple effects can be pervasive. That's why UCF RESTORES prioritizes the delivery of evidence-based training with the goal of equipping peers and professionals with the tools and information required to effectively support others on the front lines of their mental health battles. Through these training programs, UCF RESTORES also supports the creation of a more trauma-informed society – one where stigma is dismantled and those in need are empowered to seek the help they deserve.



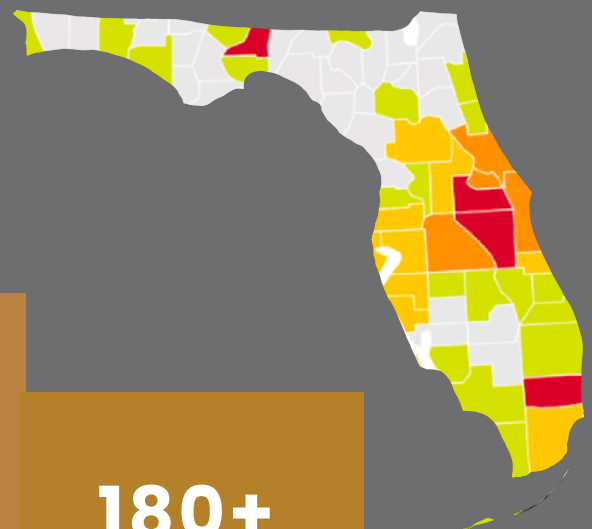
## **REACT Peer Support Training Program for Fire Service & Law Enforcement Agencies**

UCF RESTORES' signature peer support training program empowers trainees to "Recognize, Evaluate, Advocate, Coordinate, Track." Through a series of mastery-level, intensive workshops, participants gain valuable insights into providing immediate and empathetic support for their peers dealing with trauma-related stress. This course is designed specifically for the first responder community to introduce, improve and strengthen peer support skills among firefighters, EMS personnel, and law enforcement officers.



The REACT program has seen an overwhelmingly positive response from the first responder community. In 2023 alone, the UCF RESTORES REACT Training Team hosted more than 60 trainings for more than 700 first responders, representing nearly 90 agencies across Florida, Delaware, and Nebraska.

# REACT TRAINING IMPACT TO-DATE



**1,000+**  
Firefighters

**1,000+** Law  
Enforcement

**195+**  
Civilians



Since June 2022, the program has resulted in numerous referrals to various services. 36% of participants have referred peers to Peer Support Teams, 20% to Employee Assistance Programs (EAP), 14% to counseling or therapy, and 12% to chaplains or clergy. Other referrals include Critical Incident Stress Management/Debriefing teams (8%), self-help groups like AA (4%), financial support services (2%), inpatient mental health facilities (2%), and crisis hotlines (1%).

Participant feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, with over

92% agreeing or strongly agreeing that the training taught them skills to identify peers' stress levels and have supportive conversations. Similarly, 93% found the skills learned to be "useful" and the training "engaging," and would recommend it to other first responders. The instructors were praised as "knowledgeable" and "easy to follow" by 94% of participants.

Most vitally, participants have reported using their peer support skills with an average of 26 peers per month and providing referrals for additional services to an average of 13 peers per month.

## Medical REACT: Adapting the Model for Essential Healthcare Workers

Working conditions have always been challenging for those in the healthcare field, even pre-dating the pandemic. Those in the profession are often involved in intensely emotional situations and are put under immense pressure as they navigate relationships with patients, coworkers, family members, and employers.

Recognizing the unique challenges faced by healthcare essential workers, UCF RESTORES proudly introduced "Medical REACT" in August 2023. This adaptation of the proven REACT model tailors the training specifically to the needs of healthcare professionals,

equipping them with the necessary skills to navigate the emotional toll of their work. Medical REACT extends the reach of our support network, addressing the mental health challenges prevalent in the healthcare community.

By providing training that is both culturally sensitive and profession-specific, UCF RESTORES is helping to ensure that those on the front lines of healthcare have access to the tools necessary for their own well-being.

Since its launch in August, a total of five Medical REACT trainings have been provided to more than 60 healthcare professionals across five agencies or facilities.



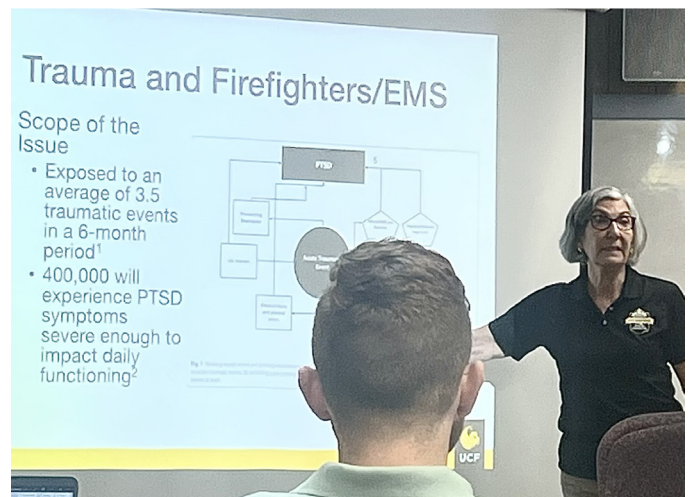
## Cultural Competency Training for Licensed Mental Health Clinicians

At UCF RESTORES, we believe that understanding the cultures unique to the individuals seeking treatment is key to success. We take this charge seriously for all groups and each of our clinicians are comprehensively trained in cultural competency for the fire service, law enforcement, and veteran communities.

In our commitment to ensuring this same level of informed care outside the walls of our clinic, UCF RESTORES continues to deliver evidence-based cultural competency training for licensed mental health clinicians interested in providing effective treatment to the fire service and/or law enforcement communities. This specialized training ensures that

clinicians have a nuanced understanding of the unique lifestyles and challenges faced by these individuals, fostering an environment of trust and effective treatment.

In the 2023 calendar year alone, UCF RESTORES completed a total of eight cultural competency training sessions for a total of 210 attendees.



# CULTURAL COMPETENCY TRAINING BREAKDOWN

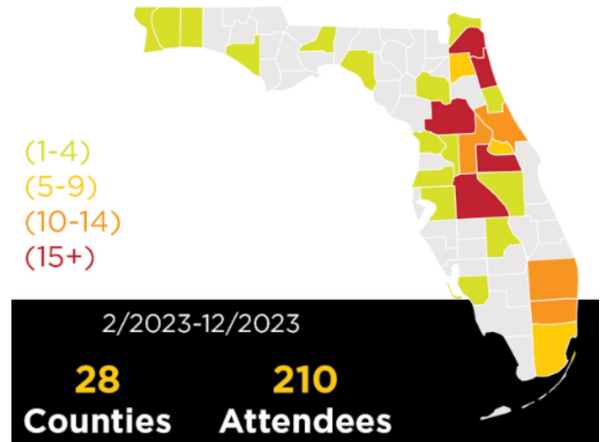


**FIRE SERVICE**  
6 TRAININGS  
109 ATTENDEES



**LAW ENFORCEMENT**  
2 TRAININGS  
101 ATTENDEES

UCF RESTORES is approved by the American Psychological Association to be a CE provider and offers this training for continuing education credit. In 2024, our team will introduce an online version of these trainings with the goal of furthering clinician accessibility and impact.




## Trauma Management Therapy (TMT) Online Training Program for Behavioral Health Clinicians

The UCF RESTORES Trauma Management Therapy (TMT) Program is an empirically supported approach for treatment of PTSD and related trauma disorders. By combining individualized exposure therapy, emerging technology, and group treatment sessions designed to teach specific coping skills, this program has empowered us to deliver optimal results without pharmaceutical intervention.

TMT remains as a cornerstone to UCF RESTORES' successful treatment approach, and we are proud to offer a training program designed to help behavioral health clinicians across the nation integrate the proven program into their practice. In 2023, the UCF RESTORES TMT Online Training Program reached new heights, with over 200 clinicians completing the course to date. By providing this training in an accessible, online format, we are able to ultimately expand the availability of evidence-based PTSD treatment nationwide.





# Critical Incident Response

## Preserving Hope in Disaster's Wake

In the aftermath of critical incidents – such as mass shootings or natural disasters – UCF RESTORES is often called to stand at the forefront, offering incident debriefings and mental health support to those affected. Our commitment to providing rapid and effective responses has positioned us as a trusted partner in times of crisis, and we're honored to serve in these times of need.

In 2023, our critical incident response efforts continued, providing timely resources and support to those

facing the aftermath of various crises. We maintained a series of "Rapid Response" resources [on our website](#), which are strategically designed for community use following a traumatic event.

Over the course of the 2023 calendar year, we hosted critical incident debriefings for first responder agencies in Sanford, Titusville, and Cape Canaveral, and also supported community response to a residential murder-suicide.

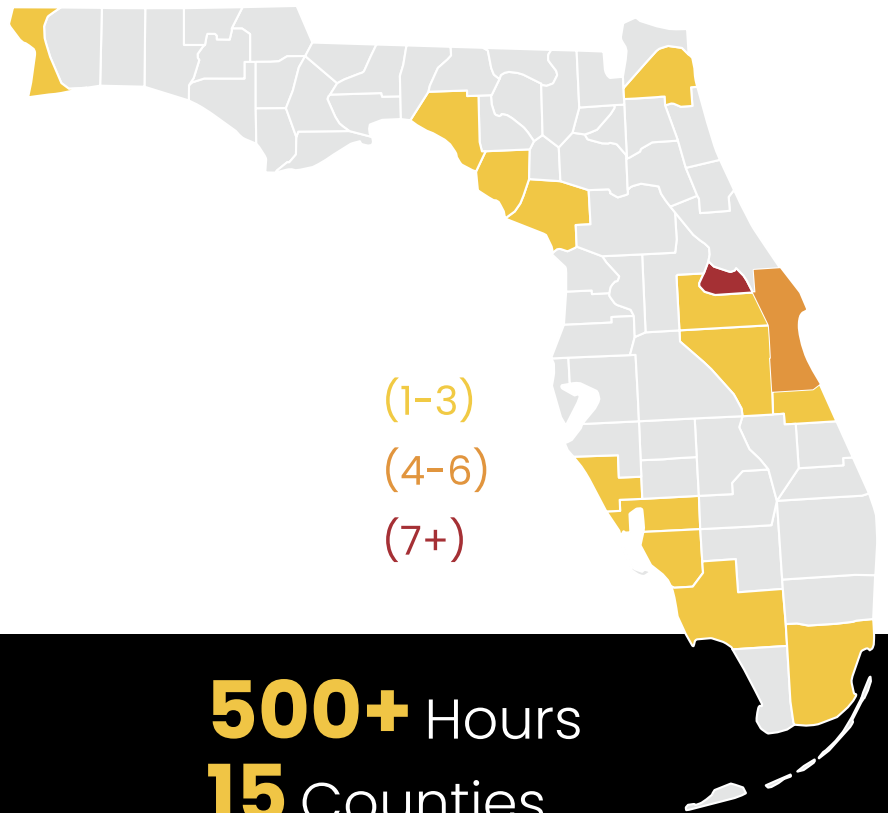


As an integral part of Florida's State Emergency Response Plan (SERP), UCF RESTORES was actively deployed as a crucial component of the Hurricane Idalia Mental Wellness Incident Management Team. In this role, we played a pivotal part in coordinating mental wellness services across the counties affected by Hurricane Idalia.



Back row CFO Jimmy Patronis (2nd from right) meets with Mental Wellness Incident Management Team (l to r) - LT Dustin Hawkins, Indian River County Fire Rescue, Deputy Chief John Whalen and Division Chief Christopher Bator, both of Coral Springs-Parkland Fire Department, and Dr. Deborah C. Beidel, Executive Director, UCF RESTORES.

Since 2019, UCF RESTORES has responded to more than 20 critical incidents across the state of Florida, investing more than 500 hours in the post-traumatic health of our communities.



(1-3)

(4-6)

(7+)

**IMPACT  
BY THE  
NUMBERS**

**500+** Hours  
**15** Counties

8/2019 - 10/2023



# Partnerships

## Forging Paths Forward

Defining the Future of VR in PTSD Treatment with Terasynth

TERASYNTH

In 2023, UCF RESTORES proudly launched a collaboration with [Terasynth](#), a leading firm in the development of virtual reality and artificial intelligence technologies. Through this partnership, Terasynth will further develop our cutting-edge, proprietary VR treatment tool – a system that already shows early promise with a highly successful clinical trial.

This VR treatment tool holds the potential to revolutionize the field of mental health treatment and provide patients with more powerful, effective options for care. Ultimately, the tool will allow licensed mental health professionals to visually recreate the scene of an individual's trauma from the comfort and convenience of their office or facility, without the need for external software developers.

# Enhancing First Responder Behavioral Health Accessibility with Life Scan Wellness Centers



Also in 2023, UCF RESTORES partnered with [Life Scan Wellness Centers](#) (LSWC), a leading provider of early detection first responder physicals. Through this partnership, our center's first responder peer support platforms – Redline Rescue for firefighters and Blueline Rescue for law enforcement – will be leveraged to enhance the options available to the thousands of first responders screened annually for behavioral wellness by Life Scan Wellness Centers.

Commenting on the partnership via press release, LSWC Deputy CEO and Ret. Broward County Exec. Assistant Fire Chief Todd LeDuc commented: "As a first responder for 37 years, and retired fire chief, I'm certain this partnership will save lives of first responders who have been detected early needing clinical assistance with their mental health. We lose far too many of my brother and sister responders every year from suicide, and intervening early with screening and capable resources will be a life saver."





# Awareness & Advocacy



## Enriching Communities, Shaping the Dialogue

### Industry Presentations & Community Trainings

At UCF RESTORES, we prioritize informing and fostering a network of support within the communities we serve. Throughout the year, our team engages in educational and advocacy initiatives to reach a variety of diverse audiences, including first responders, families, legislators, students, and healthcare personnel. In 2023, we enhanced this reach like never before, delivering more than 300 presentations, training sessions and outreach initiatives across the calendar year, covering topics like stress and trauma management, crisis response planning, crisis intervention, and takeaways from efforts made by the UCF RESTORES Critical Incident Response Team.

### Media Engagement

Our team places immense value on contributing to local and national conversations surrounding mental health treatment, resilience, and advocacy. In 2023, we continued our commitment to spreading awareness and understanding through strategic media collaborations.





- UCF RESTORES Executive Director Deborah C. Beidel, Ph.D., ABPP, provided expertise to The Wall Street Journal for two impactful features in 2023. Her insights supported an in-depth online story – "[Confronting Your Fears In Virtual Reality Therapy](#)" – as well as an episode of the Journal's podcast, "The Future of Everything" on "[How Smell Is Treating the Toughest Cases of Trauma.](#)"

Amid Men's Mental Health Month in June, Beidel was also invited to contribute to a [panel discussion on PTSD awareness with News 13.](#)

- In support of PTSD Awareness Month in June, UCF RESTORES took center focus for a University of Central Florida feature, "[UCF Researchers Pave the Way to Better Understand and Treat PTSD.](#)"



# 2023 Outreach

BY THE NUMBERS

**344** total engagements

**1,440** hours invested

**7,069** total attendees reached



*Funding Support  
& Impact*

# Seeds That Ignite Change

## Expanding First Responder Regional Support

From 2022-23, UCF RESTORES has received \$2.47 million from the Florida Department of Children and Families' First Responder Regional Support Grant. This funding has allowed for significant expansion of our nationally recognized, first responder-specific peer support and suicide prevention training programs across a 12-county region in Central Florida. The award also establishes UCF RESTORES as one of only five Regional Support Centers in Florida offering free resources to first responders in need. In 2023, our team continued delivering on this project's objectives in two key ways:

1. Harnessing Florida first responders with the power of peer support through delivery of proven, comprehensive, no-cost training.

2. Training licensed mental health clinicians in the distinct lifestyle, culture, and lingo of fire service and law enforcement professionals via APA-accredited cultural competency training.



# FIRST RESPONDER REGIONAL SUPPORT 2023 PROGRESS



## Continued Clinical Impact Supported by State Funding

Our efforts, advancements, and successes in 2023 would not have been possible without indispensable support from the Florida State Legislature. As we reflect on the impact made possible by state funding, our team extends its gratitude to Rep. David Smith and State Senator Tom Wright – two champions for our cause who recognize the importance of mental health support in building healthier, more resilient, and vibrant communities.

With their support of our 2023-24 budget request for \$1,050,000, UCF RESTORES was able to continue offering services at no cost to Floridians who have been impacted by traumatic events. In 2023 alone, UCF RESTORES provided no-cost services to Florida residents valued at more than \$700,000 while bolstering the state's first responder community with life-saving support resources.



*UCF President Alexander Cartwright presents a game ball to Florida House Representative Col. (Ret.) David Smith*



Get Involved

Scan to  
**LEARN MORE**



Please indicate "UCF RESTORES Direct Support" under "Comments"

Thank you for your consideration of and investment in our cause. Together, we're building a future where trauma is met with clinical understanding, deep compassion, and transformative support.

or visit [www.UCFRESTORES.com/Give](http://www.UCFRESTORES.com/Give)

For More  
**INFORMATION**



[www.UCFRESTORES.com](http://www.UCFRESTORES.com)



[facebook.com/UCFRESTORES](https://facebook.com/UCFRESTORES)



[linkedin.com/company/UCFRESTORES](https://linkedin.com/company/UCFRESTORES)



[@UCF\\_RESTORES](https://instagram.com/UCF_RESTORES)

**DEBORAH C. BEIDEL, PH.D., ABPP**  
Executive Director, UCF RESTORES  
UCF College of Sciences  
[Deborah.Beidel@UCF.edu](mailto:Deborah.Beidel@UCF.edu)

# Help Us Restore Lives, Families, and Communities

Join us in creating a world where trauma survivors find strength, resilience, and a proven path to healing. At UCF RESTORES, the generosity of our donors is a catalyst for change. By contributing as a donor, you can fuel our clinical impact, sustain our training programs, and empower our critical incident response efforts.