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**UCF RESTORES® and the Florida Firefighters Safety & Health Collaborative Launch First-of-its-Kind Peer Support Web Portal – Redline RescueTM**

**ORLANDO, Fla. (April 16, 2021)** – [UCF RESTORES](https://www.ucfrestores.org/) – a leading nonprofit clinical research center and trauma treatment clinic that houses the National Center of Excellence for First Responder Behavioral Health – and its partners at the [Florida Firefighters Safety & Health Collaborative](http://www.floridafirefightersafety.org/) (FFSHC) have launched a first-of-its kind, no-cost, web-hosted, anonymous peer support and clinician locating portal for first responders – [RedlineRescue.org](https://redlinerescue.org/), the fully automated version of the FFSHC’s cornerstone peer support program, made possible with financial support from the [Cigna Foundation](https://www.cigna.com/about-us/corporate-responsibility/cigna-foundation), the [North Collier Fire Control and Rescue District Administration](https://www.northcollierfire.com/) and the [Firehouse Subs Public Safety Foundation](https://firehousesubsfoundation.org/). The launch was formally announced this morning at the quarterly meeting of The Joint Council – a convening of the top decision-makers and stakeholders in Florida’s first responder community with the mission of advancing first responder resiliency, training, health and safety – which was hosted at the University of Central Florida main campus and led by Florida State Fire Marshal Division Director Julius Halas.

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 – events that are at the core of the firefighter profession. And now, with the launch of the automated web portal, the FFSHC and UCF RESTORES are delivering a new, innovative way for Florida’s hometown heroes to access the support they need. Following the completion of a brief questionnaire, RedlineRescue.org visitors are brought to a personalized landing page featuring profiles and contact information for trained, currently available peer supporters in their immediate area, as well as a list of culturally competent, professional mental health care providers that are available in case clinical support is needed.

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“The impact of a resource like RedlineRescue.org on the mental health, safety and wellbeing of the incredible first responders across our state will be unlike anything we’ve seen before,” said Florida State Fire Marshal Division Director Halas. “This is the first and only resource of its kind, and it’s inspiring to see it rolled out in our state, backed by the dedicated teams at the FFSHC and UCF RESTORES. On behalf of The Joint Council and the Florida State Fire Marshal Division, I am grateful to both organizations for their work in creating and sharing this resource at no cost to those that have dedicated their lives to serving and saving others.”

Prior to the launch of RedlineRescue.org, daily operations of the non-automated model had relied on the tireless efforts of collaborative volunteers that remained available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to serve as the personal conduits between at-risk firefighters and the help they need. Backed by insightful research data, strategic assistance and community outreach provided by UCF RESTORES, the automation of the FFSHC’s model is primed to serve firefighters in their darkest hours and, ultimately, reduce the number of lives lost in the first responder community due to completed suicide.

“For years, Redline Rescue has played a key role in the FFSHC’s ability to provide critical support to our brothers and sisters in their times of greatest need. The launch of RedlineRescue.org will completely redefine this ability, expanding the model’s reach, accessibility and effectiveness,” said Dustin Hawkins, director of the FFSHC and co-chair of its statewide mental wellness team. “One flag folded on a first responder’s casket is one too many. With the launch of RedlineRescue.org, and with the support of our partners at UCF RESTORES, we are determined to reduce the number of lives lost and, in the process, break down the detrimental stigma barrier that continues to plague our community.”

The partnership between UCF RESTORES and the FFSHC, formally established in March 2019, illustrates both organizations’ like-minded drive to provide critical resources, education, training and relief to first responders – individuals that are, statistically, more likely to die by completed suicide than in the line of duty.

“Our team is committed to helping individuals achieve posttraumatic healing and growth, and our charge would not be nearly as successful without partners like the FFSHC. We are so proud to stand by their side, today and every day, as we work toward the shared goal of restoring hope to those that may have thought it was out of reach,” said UCF RESTORES Founder and Executive Director Deborah Beidel, Ph.D., ABPP. “So many people have worked tirelessly to bring RedlineRescue.org to life, and it is an honor for our team to have played a role in the launch of such a crucial, life-saving resource.”

**ABOUT UCF RESTORES®**Established in 2011 on the core mission of restoring lives, families and communities, UCF RESTORES is working to change the way PTSD is understood, diagnosed and treated for active-duty military, first responders and survivors of mass shootings. The research center’s first-of-its-kind intensive outpatient program leverages a multidisciplinary treatment approach, incorporating exposure therapy, group treatment and new, emerging technologies to reduce the distressing symptoms that often accompany a traumatic event. This evidence-based treatment approach has seen unprecedented success, with 66% of participants with combat-related PTSD and 76% of first responders no longer meeting the diagnostic criteria for PTSD following treatment.

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For more information, visit [www.ucfrestores.org](http://www.ucfrestores.org)**.** Follow UCF RESTORES on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/UCFRESTORES/) and [Twitter](https://twitter.com/ucf_restores?lang=en).

To learn more about the Florida Firefighters Safety and Health Collaborative, please visit [www.floridafirefightersafety.org](http://www.floridafirefightersafety.org). Follow the collaborative on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/FloridaFirefighterSafety/), [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/floridafirefightersafety/) and [Twitter](https://twitter.com/floridaffsafety?lang=en).

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