
– Trauma Relief for Healthcare Professionals –

Respite, Renewal, and Support for HCPs battling COVID-19

OVERVIEW:

Healthcare professionals caring for patients with COVID-19 are experiencing significant trauma with the risk of ongoing psychosocial distress. First Descents (FD) will offer adventure-based trauma support programs for healthcare professionals as soon as it is safe to do so. Aptly titled HERO RECHARGE ([more info](#)), these low cost, non-clinical programs are designed to improve psychosocial health, nurture supportive peer relationships, and better position healthcare professionals to carry out their important work.

BACKGROUND:

While unable to deliver core programming for cancer patients, First Descents is uniquely positioned to mobilize and support healthcare professionals impacted by this crisis. With established relationships with more than 450 hospitals nationwide, FD can rapidly identify and prioritize healthcare workers most in need of trauma relief and support.

Evidence-based research demonstrates FD's impact and clinically-significant improvements in psychosocial health ([more info](#)). Consistent with standard practices, FD will implement impact evaluation efforts to assess program impact on healthcare professionals.

NEED & SIGNIFICANCE:

Doctors, nurses, and first responders are on the front lines of the most devastating health crisis of our lifetime. They are exposed to death and dying in unprecedented numbers for what will likely be a sustained time period. Moreover, healthcare workers are addressing this crisis without adequate resources or a near-term clinical solution. Their consistent, daily exposure to COVID-19 is prompting many healthcare professionals to isolate from their families for fear of transmission. These realities compound the existing, high-stress nature of healthcare work.

A [new study](#) from the Journal of the American Medical Association found that the pandemic has taken a heavy toll on healthcare employees in China. This group is experiencing symptoms of distress (71.5%), depression (50.4%), anxiety (44.6%) and insomnia (34%), and female healthcare workers were among those particularly prone to problems, the study found.

Left unaddressed and without effective opportunities for respite and renewal, the healthcare system may face long term disruption. Simply put, we must care for those who care for all others.

– MISSION –

First Descents provides life-changing outdoor adventure programs for young adults impacted by cancer and other serious health conditions

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS:

Through *Prescribe Adventure* ([more info](#)), First Descents has established a collaborative network of more than 900 healthcare influencers from 450 partnering medical centers that continues to grow each day. FD is conducting a landscape analysis to identify partnering medical centers that have been most directly impacted by COVID-19. FD’s Medical Advisory Board and COVID-19 Task Force is also consulting with communicable disease experts and key hospital stakeholders (nurses, nurse practitioners, physicians, social workers, and patient care teams) to determine necessary program considerations for healthcare providers to feel safe and supported.

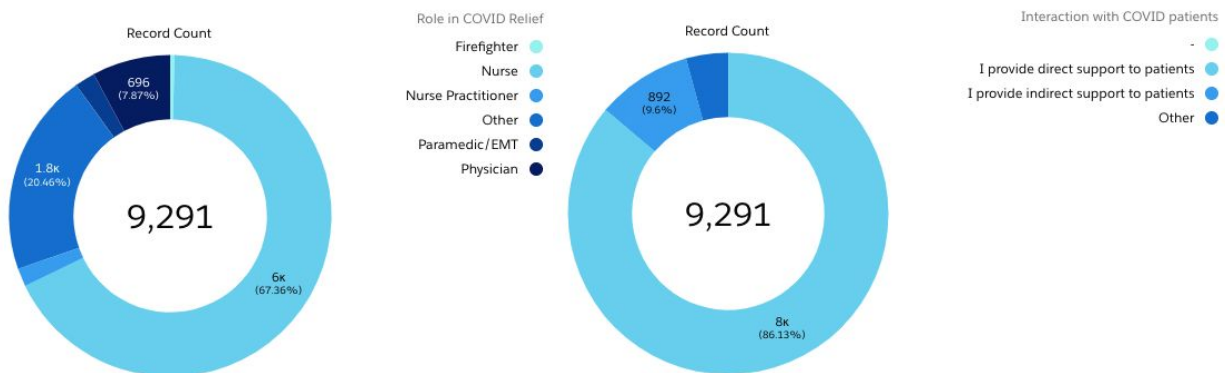
Since the launch of HERO RECHARGE on April 28, 2020, First Descents has received more than 9,200 inquiries from health care workers and first responders across all 50 states.

PROGRAM DESIGN:

First Descents will work directly with new and existing hospital partners to create custom single and multi-day programs for nurses, doctors, social workers, and first responders. All First Descents programs have been intentionally designed with guidance from mental health professionals to debrief and process grief, anxiety, and loss.

First Descents has hired Dr. Wendy Bamberg, an infectious disease specialist, to advise on comprehensive safety protocols. Dr. Bamberg’s directives will inform deliberate risk mitigation with special precaution against COVID-19 transmission between participants and community exposure. This will include pre-trip testing, as available.

With a nationwide network of staff and outfitters, First Descents has the infrastructure and capacity to administer programs across the country.



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RESEARCH & EVALUATION:

First Descents is collaborating with investigators at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to submit a research proposal assessing the feasibility and effectiveness of HERO RECHARGE. The study intends to measure FD's impact on specific phenomena affecting health care workers and first responders, including stress, burnout, resilience, and well-being.

IMPACT:

The economic and psychosocial implications of the current health crisis are far reaching and undeniable. New and innovative solutions must foster collaboration between medical providers and community-led organizations to address socio-economic inequities in patient care and ease the financial burden on an under-resourced healthcare system.

HERO RECHARGE will **improve provider health outcomes, strengthen healthcare system vitality, and support local economies**, to achieve Triple Aim impact. Beyond the benefits to participant health and healthcare system vitality, HERO RECHARGE will also route much-needed business to local economies, particularly to businesses working in travel and hospitality.

SUPPORT & COSTS:

With more than 9,200 inquiries to date, First Descents aims to secure \$1,500,000 in new revenue to underwrite its trauma support program expansion. Securing this restricted funding enables FD to meet the needs of healthcare workers without impacting donor funds already designated to core oncology and multiple sclerosis programming.

FD will immediately deploy funds against the development of single and multi-day programs in key geographies nationwide. Depending on activity type and duration, each program will welcome between 15 and 30 healthcare professionals, with per-capita costs ranging between \$500 - \$1,500. These costs include program guides, permits, meals, lodging, and transportation. To date, First Descents has secured \$360,000 against its \$1,500,000 project goal. This includes a leadership \$200,000 gift from the Dunkin' Joy in Childhood Foundation.

HEALTHCARE WORKER TESTIMONIAL:

First Descents has received thousands of testimonials from frontline workers and first responders. Their selfless service strengthens our resolve to provide respite and renewal in beautiful wild places.

"During this crisis, my wife and I have been working for FEMA. We left our jobs in Florida to work on the frontline in New York City. We have worked 29 of the past 33 days as registered nurses to deliver exceptional patient care at the bedside on units considered "hot zones." The suffering and devastation that we have seen here in New York has been haunting. It is something that will be with us forever. I believe a First Descents experience would allow us to decompress with peers who have experienced similar situations and find some kind of peace." – Registered Nurse, NYC

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LONGEVITY:

The COVID-19 pandemic has illuminated a tremendous negligence within our Nation's healthcare system: the lack of mental and behavioral health services available to healthcare workers and first responders. This significant gap in care leaves these professionals especially vulnerable now, and in the future. While Hero Recharge has been designed to address the immediate community needs of the COVID-19 pandemic, First Descents' Board of Directors have approved these program offerings to remain a long term service of the organization.

ABOUT:

[First Descents](#) (FD) is the global leader in adventure-based healing. Through outdoor adventure and community building, FD improves the health and quality of life for young adults impacted by cancer and other serious health conditions. Beginning in 2020, First Descents will offer programs for healthcare workers on the frontlines of COVID-19.

RESOURCES:

Website ([link](#))
HERO RECHARGE Inquiry Page ([link](#))
HERO RECHARGE Donation Page ([link](#))
Impact Evaluation ([link](#))
Annual Report ([link](#))
NEJM: *Preventing a Parallel Pandemic* ([link](#))
New York Times: *PTSD and Burnout Threaten Medical Workers* ([link](#))

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