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**- 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. In response, First Descents (FD) is offering adventure-based trauma support programs to serve healthcare professionals on the frontlines of the pandemic. 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 patients coping with cancer and MS, 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.

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**- MISSION -**

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

**LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS:**

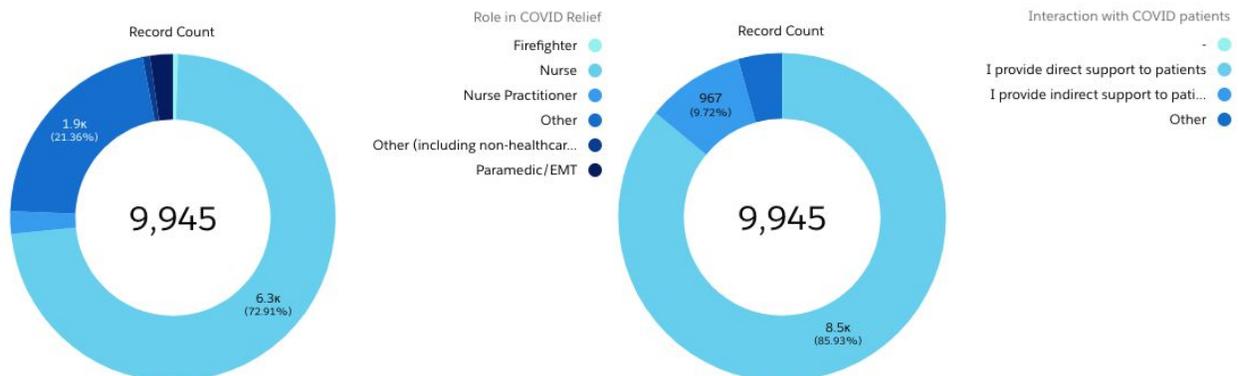
Through *Prescribe Adventure* ([more info](#)), First Descents has established a collaborative network of more than 900 healthcare influencers from 450 partnering medical centers that continues to grow each day. First Descents has identified key geographies and partnering medical centers that have been most directly impacted by COVID-19. FD’s Medical Advisory Board and COVID-19 Task Force are 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 9,945 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 and a communicable disease plan. Dr. Bamberg’s directives will inform deliberate risk mitigation with special precaution against COVID-19 transmission between participants and community exposure. These protocols include pre-program and on-site health screenings, mandatory mask compliance, social distancing guidelines, increased cleaning practices, and single-occupancy lodging accommodations.



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### IMPLEMENTATION:

First Descents has initiated a phased implementation plan, focusing first on regions declared suitable for in-person programs by the organization's infectious disease specialist and communicable disease plan ([more info](#)). Key geographies include Boston, Chicago, Denver, Detroit, Los Angeles, New York City, San Francisco, and Seattle. To date, FD has executed 10 programs serving 140 healthcare professionals ([more info](#)). Their testimonials strengthen our resolve to provide respite and renewal in wild places.

*"This program was one of the greatest experiences of my life. For the first time in a long time, I feel happy, alive, and that I've been given a fresh start. I am rejuvenated and motivated to keep fighting to save lives" - 2020 New York Hero Recharge Participant, ICU Nurse, NYU Langone Health*

FD will execute between 35-75 programs serving an estimated 500 - 1,125 healthcare professionals in 2021. FD will scale beyond these planned programs as more funding is secured.

### 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:

To meet growing participant demand, FD aims to secure a minimum of \$2.25M in new revenue to scale programming and serve a critical mass of healthcare professionals.

FD will immediately deploy funds against the development of 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 averaging \$2,500. These costs include program guides, permits, meals, lodging, transportation, and administrative overhead. To date, First Descents has secured \$480,000 against its \$2.25M project goal. This includes a leadership \$200,000 gift from the Dunkin' Joy in Childhood Foundation.

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#### **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*

#### **FUTURE PROGRAMMING:**

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](#))  
Program Overview ([link](#))  
NEJM: *Preventing a Parallel Pandemic* ([link](#))  
New York Times: *PTSD and Burnout Threaten Medical Workers* ([link](#))

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