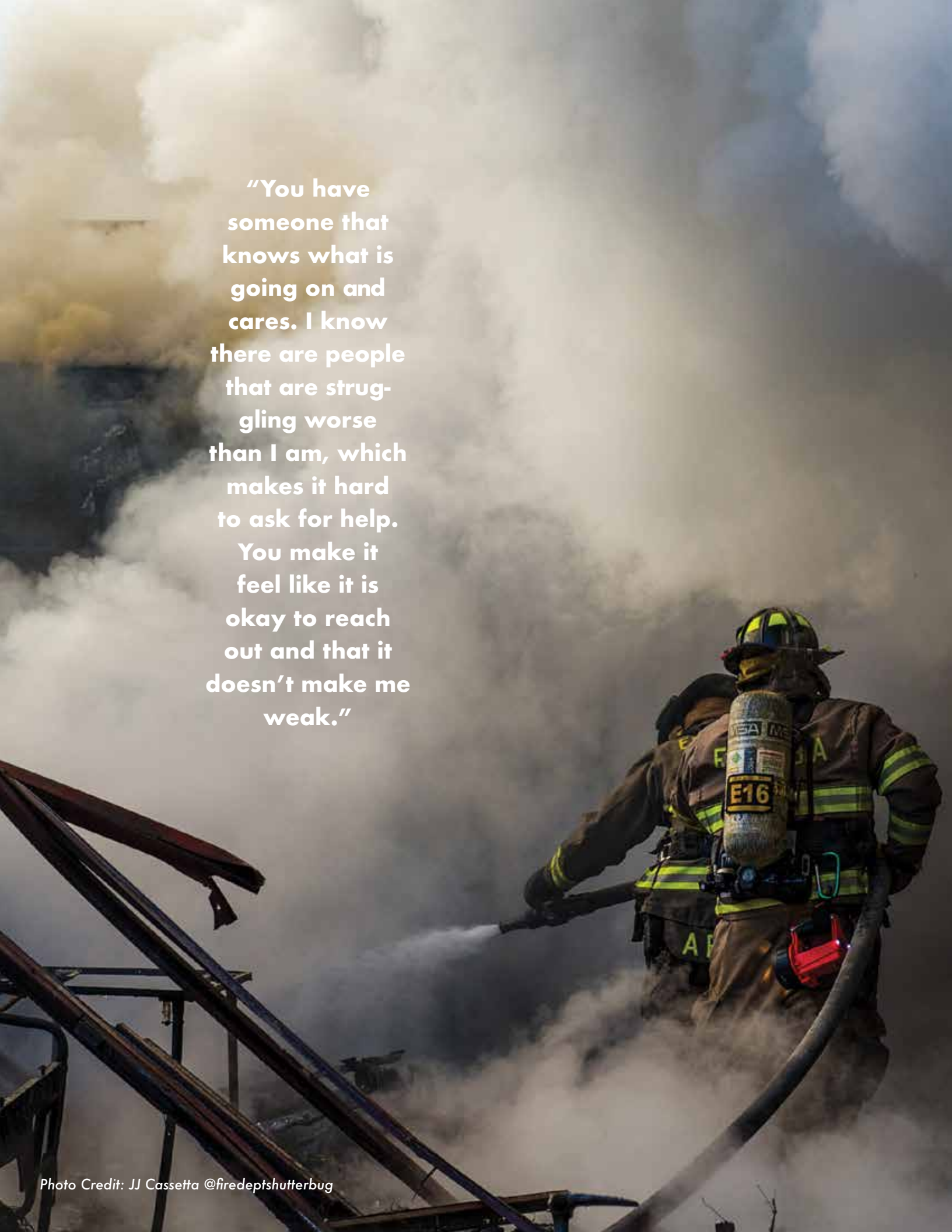


"It Is Mission Critical"

—First Responder and 2nd Alarm Project Program Participant

2025 IMPACT REPORT

**"You have
someone that
knows what is
going on and
cares. I know
there are people
that are strug-
gling worse
than I am, which
makes it hard
to ask for help.
You make it
feel like it is
okay to reach
out and that it
doesn't make me
weak."**





Dear Colleagues, Supporters, and First Responder Community

It is with deep gratitude and continued purpose that I share an update on the evolving impact of the 2nd Alarm Project.

What began in 2019 as a regional initiative for Northwest Florida fire service has grown into a statewide leader in first responder mental wellness—supporting thousands of first responders, families, and agencies across Florida and beyond. As our mission continues to expand, so does our commitment: to proactively build and sustain the well-being of first responders and those who stand beside them.

Through innovative programs, evidence-based practices, and trusted partnerships, we've created a statewide network of services, trainings, and resources designed specifically for the unique realities of public safety life. From peer support and behavioral health navigation to family programming, retiree outreach, and large-scale health communications—we remain focused on equipping first responders and their loved ones with the tools to thrive, not just survive.

This year also marked an exciting and transformative milestone: our formal merger with UCF RESTORES, a nationally recognized leader in trauma research and treatment. This partnership strengthens our clinical and research foundation, expands our capacity to serve, and positions us to lead Florida's efforts in advancing first responder wellness through innovation, collaboration, and sustainability.

At the center of this work are the first responders and families who allow us to walk beside them. Your strength is what drives our team every single day. This project is more than a program—it's a shared commitment to healing, resilience, and change in public safety.

Together, we've achieved powerful milestones:

- Over 733 peer supporters trained, with more than 12,000 peer support encounters logged
- More than 5,000 individuals trained through targeted workshops and resilience-building seminars
- 4,000+ first responders and family members served through clinical services or behavioral health navigation

Each of these numbers represents something far greater—a life supported, a career preserved, a family strengthened. These are the quiet victories that define our mission.

As we move forward, we remain grounded in evidence, committed to collaboration, and unwavering in our dedication to Florida's first responder community. Thank you for continuing to walk this journey with us. Your support, partnership, and trust fuel everything we do.

With Gratitude,

Kellie O'Dare

Founder and Executive Director



Our Reach

The 2nd Alarm Project[®] is a nonprofit organization established at Florida A&M University to offer comprehensive, evidence-based resiliency initiatives in our first responder communities.

What began in 2019 after Hurricane Michael as a federal grant funded program for NW Florida fire service members has grown to serve as a comprehensive mental wellness resource for first responders, and their families, in the state of Florida and beyond.

Vision

Our vision at the 2nd Alarm Project is to create a transformative and enduring impact on the well-being of first responders, their families, and organizations.

We aim to cultivate a culture of resilience, support, and capability to sustain mental wellness infrastructure within first responder organizations.





Serving Florida plus 32 states outside of Florida (Georgia, Ohio, Alabama, Arkansas, New York, Oregon, Tennessee, North Dakota, Indiana, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Wisconsin, Colorado, Idaho, Washington, Hawaii, Missouri, Texas, North Carolina, Nevada, California, Minnesota, Louisiana, Rhode Island, Michigan, Massachusetts, North Dakota, Maryland, Maine, New Mexico, New Jersey) as well as Canada.

Mission

The mission of the 2nd Alarm Project is to proactively enhance the well-being of first responders, their families, and organizations by fostering resilient public safety communities. Through a comprehensive and evidence-based approach, we are dedicated to providing resources, specialized training, and accessible services. We work to equip first responders and their family members with the skills to effectively manage challenges and promote healthier lives, harnessing their inherent strengths.

Our Team

Our team is comprised of university faculty, licensed mental health providers, retired and active first responders, public health and social work professionals, researchers, first responder family members, and other experts in first responder behavioral health program development, implementation, and evaluation.

Who We Serve

Fire Service • Law Enforcement • Corrections

Emergency Medical Services • 911 Telecommunicators

Fire Arson Investigators • Forensics • Flight Medics/Crews Family Members • Retirees • Recruits/Cadets • Beach Safety



FOCUS AREA 1



FIRST RESPONDER PEER SUPPORT COORDINATION

Peer support is the heart of a resilient first responder organization. The 2nd Alarm Project supports departments in building peer support teams, facilitates initial training and continuing education for members, and assists with clinical direction and oversight of teams. Since 2020, the 2nd Alarm Project has trained 733 first responder peer support specialists. These peer specialists have engaged in 12,113 encounters with their first responder colleagues providing mental wellness support, resources, and referrals. These peer team members have also participated in many local and regional critical-incident based responses and statewide deployments including serving at the NAS Pensacola Mass Shooting (2019), Surfside Building Collapse (2021), Chipola Complex Wildfires (2022), Hurricane Ian (2022), Hurricane Idalia (2023), Hurricane Helene (2024), Hurricane Debby (2024) and the FSU mass shooting (2025).

FEEDBACK FROM FIRST RESPONDERS WHO ACCESSED PEER SUPPORT

On a scale of 1-5 (1 being least and 5 being most satisfied), first responders who received peer support ranked their overall satisfaction 4.2 on average. A large proportion of first responders regard peer support as valuable (85%), and of those who have used peer support, the majority reported experiencing improvement in the concern for which they sought peer support (68%).



"Talking to someone who knows the job and has seen the same things is helpful, there is a genuine concern and a brotherhood bond that cannot be described or explained." — Peer Support Participant

Our Impact

Peer Support Capacity Building Work from 2020 to March 2025

Peer Support Trainings Facilitated	64
New Peer Supporters Trained	733
Peer Support Encounters	12,113
Regional Critical Incident Response	119
Disaster Deployments	8

Peer Support Specialists Trained By Profession

Firefighters & EMS/Paramedic	447
Law Enforcement	121
9-1-1 Dispatchers	14
Other	16

The most common concerns first responders reported seeking peer support for are stress, critical incidents, anxiety, PTSD, relationship or family concerns, substance use, and workplace concerns.

Most expressed high satisfaction with peer support interactions citing availability, empathy, relatability, and camaraderie of peer supporters.



"It was invaluable in that I could vent without worry of any repercussions and was reassured of confidentiality being of utmost importance. I appreciated being listened to, understood, and referred to a clinician who was well-versed in first responders schedules and situations."

— Peer Support Participant

"Connection with someone that has been where I am. Someone that gets me." — Peer Support Participant

FOCUS AREA 2

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Our education and training area focuses on initiatives specifically tailored to enhance the knowledge of first responders and families regarding mental wellness. Our team aims to provide knowledge, build skills, and boost competencies among training participants, all directed towards promoting their well-being and resiliency. We craft and deliver structured workshops, seminars, and interactive sessions, catering to both foundational and specialized aspects of first responder mental wellness.



Trainings Provided for First Responders/Departments

Peer Support Training

Mental Health Awareness

Struggle Well

Fostering Resiliency Through Leadership in First Responder Organizations

First Responder Families Workshops

For more information on these trainings or to request a training scan here:



2nd Alarm Project Trainings from 2020 through March 2025

Trainings Completed
People Trained

218
5,294

FEEDBACK FROM 2ND ALARM PROJECT TRAINING PARTICIPANTS



"Bringing this to rural communities is a win for this profession."

"From someone who is just going into EMS, it's encouraging to know that although there will be hardship, I have resources and support at my fingertips that will keep me healthier, happier, safer, and in the field for longer."

"This training is crucial to being able to help a brother or sister who may be having a behavioral health issue or crisis"

"I have enjoyed the impact that this class has had on my life. I recommend it often to others."

"As a newer firefighter I feel that this training will help me as I step further into the role in the field. It provided resources and confidence to approach members that are seasoned and newer with a greater understanding of the purpose behind the peer support team."



80% of attendees reported improvements in their overall awareness of first responder mental health after participating in 2nd Alarm Project trainings.

Participants gave 4.8 out of 5 stars rating for quality of 2nd Alarm Project trainings.



**"STRUGGLE WELL HAS CHANGED MY
ENTIRE OUTLOOK ON LIFE. I HAVE BEEN
IN A DARK PLACE AND THIS CLASS GAVE
ME A NEW PERSPECTIVE."**

—STRUGGLE WELL PARTICIPANT

80%
of attendees reported
improvements in mental
health awareness

Struggle Well for First Responders

The 2nd Alarm Project partners with the Boulder Crest Foundation to provide Struggle Well training to first responders. All Struggle Well Trainings are based on the framework of Posttraumatic Growth, which features five phases, built on an environment of trust and connection. The objective of Struggle Well Training is to enable participants to prepare, practice, and implement an individualized plan for personal growth by transforming struggle into strength, enabling them to be of continued service to themselves, their family, their work, their community, and their country. Struggle Well training participants experienced an average of 43% Posttraumatic Growth in the areas of New Possibilities, Deeper Relationships, Personal Strength, Appreciation for Life, and Spiritual or Existential Change.

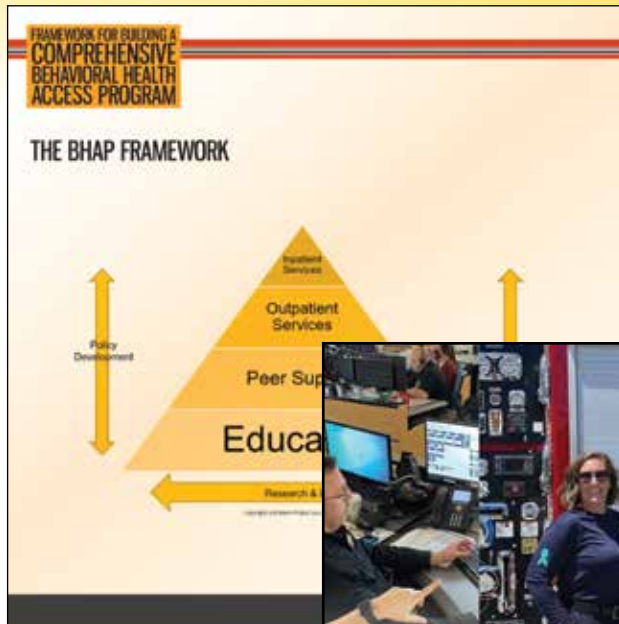
BHAP Toolkit

The 2nd Alarm Project provides support to departments in building comprehensive Behavioral Health Access Programs (BHAP). The BHAP is recognized by the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation as a best practice and is becoming a world standard of care for first responder mental health and wellness. In 2023, the 2nd Alarm Project launched the online BHAP Toolkit. Since then over 700 people have registered to download the toolkit. The BHAP Toolkit is a free, comprehensive resource designed to provide evidence-informed tools to prioritize mental wellness and resiliency in first responder organizations.

Developed in collaboration with the Florida Firefighters Safety and Health Collaborative, UCF RESTORES, The City of Coral Springs, and with support from The Florida Department of Children and Families, the BHAP Toolkit equips first responders with tangible tools, resources, and strategies to seamlessly integrate the BHAP model into day-to-day operations. The Toolkit also includes a section for clinicians interested in working with first responders. This section of the BHAP Toolkit helps to build clinicians' capacity and connect them with the best available training and resources to provide culturally competent treatment for first responders and their families.

SCAN QR CODE OR VISIT
WWW.2NDALARMPROJECT.ORG/BHAP-TOOLKIT/
TO REGISTER FOR BHAP TOOLKIT





BUILDING FAMILY SUPPORT

TRANSITIONING TO RETIREMENT

Address Challenges that First Responders' Families Face

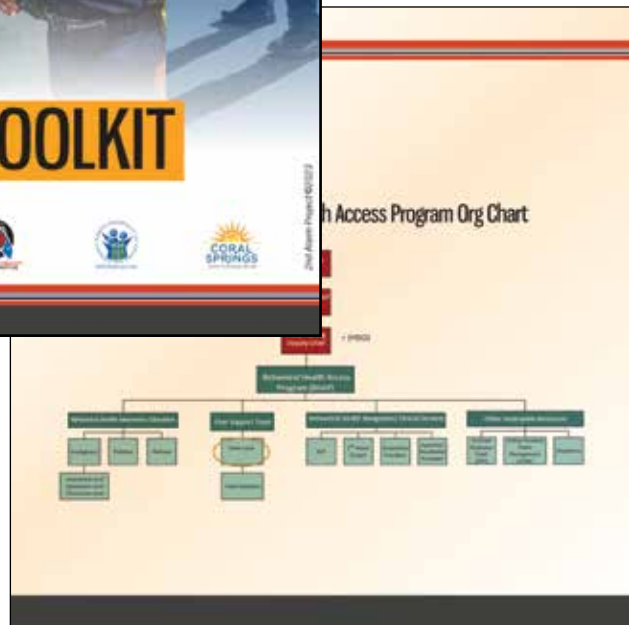
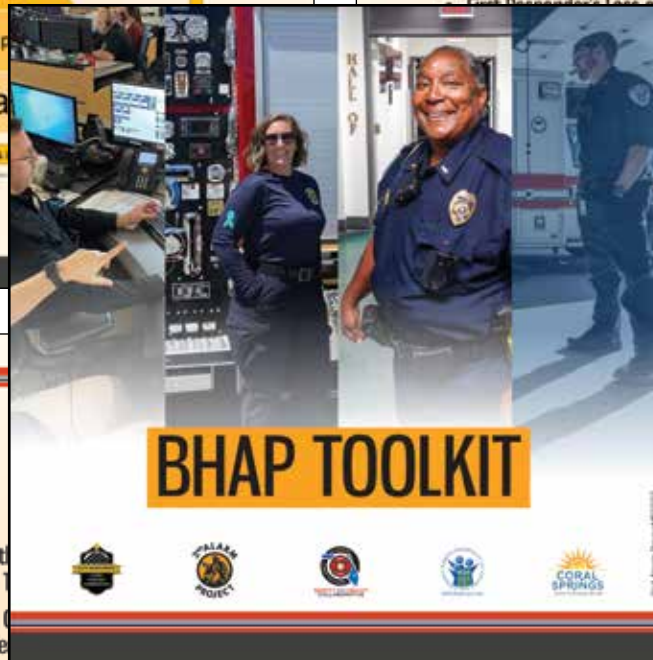
- Sleep Issues
- Depression
- First Responders' Loss of Identity

Resources

CRITICAL INCIDENT OUTREACH

IMPORTANCE OF CRITICAL INCIDENT OUTREACH

- Provide Your Members with Resources Available to Them
- Provide Your Team with a Critical Incident Education from Trusted Team
- Lay The Foundation for Follow Up with These Members
- Reinforce The Buddy System
- Continue to De-Stigmatize Mental Wellness within Our Community



“THIS TOOLKIT HAS THE POTENTIAL TO CHANGE THE FACE OF MENTAL WELLNESS IN FIRST RESPONDER ORGANIZATIONS.” *—TOOLKIT USER*

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH NAVIGATION

The 2nd Alarm Project provides professional and peer led behavioral health navigation services with the goal of guiding first responders and their families through and around barriers in the complex mental health system. This includes developing local community treatment networks at the routine, urgent, and crisis levels, providing an initial evidence-based assessment, and providing referral and follow-up. When appropriate, we offer direct outpatient counseling services, with both telehealth and in-person options for certain geographic locations. Our team of first responder proficient, behavioral health experts use evidence-based approaches to treating concerns common among first responders, including PTSD, anxiety, depression, substance concerns, and more.

Since 2020, the 2nd Alarm Project has provided 4,491 Behavioral Health Navigation services for first responders and their family members, providing and/or linking them to critical health promoting and life-saving services.



Impacting Lives

A FIREFIGHTER carried the heavy burden of grief and loss after the passing of their father. Although they met the demands of their work with strength, the grief lingered, affecting them both at home and on the job. Encouraged by a member of their peer support team, they took the brave step and sought counseling with a therapist experienced in supporting first responders. Through counseling and the continued support of their peer support team, they found a safe space to unpack their grief. Now, they actively support other firefighters grappling with loss, reminding them that strength isn't just about facing the flames but finding the courage to face what's within.

A FIRE DEPARTMENT was known for its high turnover rates as well as stigma surrounding mental health and seeking help. Change began when a small group within the department advocated for a healthier, more supportive work environment and spearheaded the formation of a peer support team. Leadership joined the effort by implementing regular mental health awareness classes for all employees and provided new hires with comprehensive mental health resources from day one. In just a few short years, the department went from a place of silence and stigma to one where mental health and well-being were openly prioritized.

FIRST RESPONDER BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CLINICAL SERVICES FEEDBACK

95%

A large majority of participants reported improvement in the condition or problems for which they sought behavioral health services.

CLIENT FEEDBACK SURVEYS REFLECT

an aggregate 100% satisfaction score in the areas of being treated with courtesy and respect by the behavioral health clinician

the inclination to visit the same provider again if needed, the likelihood of recommending the provider to other first responders

the likelihood of recommending the 2nd Alarm Project to other first responders



*"Thank you for the 2nd Alarm Project. This service will help and save lives."
—First Responder*

"Everything was absolutely fantastic. Very timely response and great information. I was very hesitant to use this at first but I am so glad I did. Once again thank you all for everything." —First Responder

"The help I have received has been wonderful!" —First Responder

"THANK YOU FOR EVERYTHING. The counseling we received was the single most helpful thing for both of us on so many levels." —First Responder Spouse



A young child with curly hair is leaning over a German Shepherd dog. The child is wearing a light-colored shirt. The dog is looking down. The text 'FOCUS AREA 4' is written vertically in large, bold, orange letters over the image.

FOCUS AREA 4

FAMILY, RETIREES & CADET SUPPORTS

The Families, Retirees, and Cadet Supports section of our program is dedicated to providing specialized resources and services for these distinct groups. We recognize the crucial role that families play in supporting first responders, and we offer resources, navigation, and workshops tailored to their unique needs. For retirees, we offer ongoing support during and after their transition from active duty. Our program also extends to cadets, equipping them with foundational mental wellness skills that prepare them for their future roles. Since 2020, we have conducted first responder families workshops, worked with several regional cadet groups, and provided support to approximately a dozen departments developing retiree-specific programs.

In 2023, the 2nd Alarm Project conducted survey research with first responder retirees as well as first responder family members. These data, including the deep and rich experiences of the survey respondents, are integral to shaping the 2nd Alarm Project's work among these populations.





IN THE WORDS OF FIRST RESPONDERS

"(The most helpful resource in retirement is) Peer and other counseling in regard to PTSD type feelings and issues". —Retired First Responder

"(The most challenging thing in retirement is) Loss of identity, no longer a part of a brotherhood due to others leaving and not being recognized by new cops as old retired brothers" —Retired First Responder



IN THE WORDS OF FIRST RESPONDER FAMILY MEMBERS

"I'm really grateful for programs like the 2nd Alarm Project that can provide counseling and support to the first responders themselves because I am not equipped to help them navigate the trauma." —First Responder Spouse

"On the one hand it's great for them to have such a wonderful role model of someone who helps others and they are so proud of their Dad and want to be like him. They love to visit him at work and climb on the fire engines. On the other hand they definitely don't get to be with him as much as we would like and we feel his absence keenly during holidays and family events that he is unable to attend." —First Responder Spouse

"The most rewarding aspect of being a first responder family member is the proudness we feel when we see the impact he has on the lives of people in his community. Being able to see the amount of people that truly love, care, and appreciate him almost as much as we do is something that we are proud of." —First Responder Spouse





FOCUS AREA 5

CAPACITY BUILDING & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

True sustainability of mental wellness initiatives among first responders involves empowering local agencies and organizations to establish and sustain their own programs and resources. The 2nd Alarm Project is committed to providing comprehensive support through Technical Assistance and Capacity Building initiatives for organizations seeking to establish and enhance mental wellness programs. Technical Assistance offered includes tailored guidance, training, and consultation services to help departments navigate the complexities of designing mental wellness initiatives. Capacity Building focuses on strengthening the overall capabilities of organizations to independently manage and sustain their mental wellness programs. Through resources such as our BHAP Toolkit, we strive to equip departments to cultivate a supportive environment that prioritizes the mental well-being of their personnel.

The 2nd Alarm Project has actively worked with over 70 of first responder organizations to build mental wellness and BHAP programs.

"THE TEAM HAS BEEN INCREDIBLY HELPFUL IN WORKING THROUGH THE BHAP PLAN. I APPRECIATE THE TIME AND EFFORT INVESTED TO ASSIST OUR AGENCY IN BUILDING RESOURCES TO ASSIST OUR MEMBERS."

—FIRST RESPONDER AND CAPACITY BUILDING PARTICIPANT

MASS REACH HEALTH COMMUNICATIONS

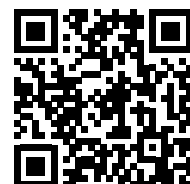
The Mass Reach Health Communications section of our program is dedicated to fostering effective and accurate information sharing. The 2nd Alarm Project ensures clear and timely dissemination of mental health resources, program updates, and relevant insights to all stakeholders, including first responders, families, retirees, and organizations. Through various communication channels such as newsletters, social media, and interactive platforms, we aim to promote awareness, reduce stigma, and encourage open dialogue around mental wellness.

Since 2020, the 2nd Alarm Project has generated over 129 million impressions over these various platforms with over 700,000 visits to the 2nd Alarm Project website (2ndAlarmProject.org). In addition, over 14,000 first responders and family members clicked to download the 2nd Alarm Project Mobile App, designed to provide mental health resources, self-assessments, linkages to trained peer supporters and clinicians, and access to our BHAP Toolkit.

In January 2025, the 2nd Alarm Project began the 2nd Alarm Project Radio to host monthly podcasts. The podcast explores the depths of resilience, shares stories of strength, and provides a platform for the crucial discussions about mental health in the first responder community. Since its inception there have been 12 podcast episodes with over 400 downloads.



FOCUS AREA 6





FOCUS AREA 7

PLANNING EVALUATION & SUSTAINABILITY

The Planning, Evaluation, and Sustainability area is focused on strategic development, continuous improvement, and ensuring long-term viability of the 2nd Alarm Project's work. Project staff plan evidence-based initiatives tailored to the evolving needs of first responders. Evaluation and data analysis allow us to assess the effectiveness of our interventions and make informed adjustments. Additionally, we work to create a sustainable framework that will allow our program to endure over time, ensuring that the well-being of first responders remains a priority for years to come.

To-date, our research team has included over 2,500 first responders and family members in various research initiatives. These initiatives have generated 12 peer reviewed journal publications, 3 articles in first responder trade journals, and are used for program evaluation to inform programmatic decisions.

**ACCESS OUR RESEARCH AT
WWW.2NDALARMPROJECT.ORG/NEWS/RESEARCH/**



Supported [in part] by grant numbers H79FG000149 and 1H79SM084369 from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The content does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of SAMHSA or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).



Sponsored by Florida A&M University and [in part] by the State of Florida, Department of Children and Families.

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE
2ND ALARM PROJECT,
INCLUDING HOW TO SUPPORT
OUR MISSION VISIT:



**“THANK YOU FOR THE 2ND
ALARM PROJECT. THIS SERVICE
WILL HELP SAVE LIVES.”**

—FIRST RESPONDER AND 2ND ALARM PROJECT
PROGRAM PARTICIPANT

Photo Credit: JJ Cassetta @firedeptshutterbug



2ndAlarmProject@famu.edu
www.2ndAlarmProject.org

©2025 2nd Alarm Project. 2nd Alarm Project is a Registered Trademark