

The Hernando County Sheriff's Office (HCSO) proposes the HCSO Employee Wellness Initiative project as part of our commitment to supporting the mental health, wellness, and overall well-being of its employees and their families. The goal of this project is to enhance its employee wellness program by expanding peer support capabilities, increasing access to wellness education, and providing resources that address personal and family stressors that can impact health, resilience, and job performance.

As a law enforcement agency that coordinates and participates in homeland security and public safety initiatives, including cooperation with federal law enforcement efforts addressing illegal immigration and coordination with the Homeland Security Task Force, HCSO recognizes the operational stressors placed on law enforcement personnel and the importance of maintaining a resilient, well-supported workforce.

Funding in the amount of \$61,470 is requested to support specialized peer support training and professional development that will enhance the agency's ability to provide timely, effective assistance to employees experiencing personal, occupational, or critical incident-related stress. HCSO currently partners with the University of Central Florida through a separate grant-supported initiative to provide Mental Health First Aid training for graduating academy cadets and Youth Mental Health First Aid training for School Resource Officers and Guardians in Hernando County. This effort has strengthened the agency's mental health education framework and demonstrated the value of early intervention, mental health literacy, and wellness-focused training.

The proposed project will strengthen these efforts by expanding its capabilities and long-term sustainability. Funding will certify peer team members in International Critical Incident Stress Foundation (ICISF) Group and Individual Crisis Intervention, enhancing their ability to support employees affected by traumatic incidents, cumulative stress, and personal crises. Additional peer team members will earn UCF RESTORES Peer Certification, and one peer team member will become an ICISF instructor to build internal training capacity, further enhancing the team's expertise in evidence-based peer support and trauma-informed response.

The project will also provide financial wellness education for employees and their spouses to improve financial literacy, strengthen financial decision-making, reduce financial stress, and promote long-term financial stability. Resources will include structured education on budgeting, debt reduction, savings, and personal financial planning to support financial wellness and long-term self-sufficiency.

Key project partners include UCF RESTORES through the University of Central Florida, peer support and crisis intervention training providers, financial wellness education providers, and community-based mental health and wellness organizations.

While the primary beneficiaries are agency employees and their families, the project will also benefit the community. Supporting employee mental health and well-being enhances

resilience, reduces burnout, improves retention and job performance, and strengthens the quality, consistency, and effectiveness of services provided to the public.

The agency will regularly monitor wellness program participation and collect employee feedback to identify areas for improvement, refine program offerings, and ensure the long-term sustainability and effectiveness of its wellness initiatives.

By expanding specialized peer support training, financial wellness resources, and ongoing mental health education, this project will promote healthier employees, stronger families, greater organizational resilience, and a culture that prioritizes wellness and readiness.