



# FOUNDATION FOR FIRST RESPONDER WELLNESS AND RESILIENCY

BECAUSE NOT ALL WOUNDS ARE VISIBLE

Where do our heroes go  
when **THEY** need  
help and support?



**The Foundation for First Responder Wellness and Resiliency** is a newly established nonprofit organization dedicated to enhancing the mental health and overall well-being of our first responders. By prioritizing accessibility and taking a holistic approach, the Foundation fosters a culture of support, resilience, and long-term wellness for the entire public safety community, both active and retired, as well as their families.

## FOUNDATION PILLARS



### BEHAVIORAL & PHYSICAL HEALTH SERVICES

Our aim is to provide private and confidential behavioral and physical health services to address the unique needs of our first responders. **Mental health and wellness are a necessity for these brave men and women, not a luxury.** Therefore, we strive to break down barriers to care, raise awareness, and advocate for the critical need for mental health support for those who bravely serve and protect our communities.



### EDUCATION & TRAINING PROGRAMS

The Foundation's education and training programs will **empower and strengthen the resilience of our public safety community.** Access to financial counseling and wellness education—such as mindfulness, post-traumatic growth, spiritual counseling, and sleep and nutrition—will further support mental, physical, and overall well-being.



### EVIDENCE-BASED RESEARCH

Through FORWARD focused evidence-based research, we will **establish best practices and strategies** to help us understand what works to support first responders in the real world. Our goal is to find **straight forward, actionable solutions** that make real and measurable differences in the lives of those who serve.

## Service + Sacrifice

Our nation's first responders dedicate their lives to protecting and serving our communities. Not only are their jobs physically demanding, but these brave men and women are repeatedly exposed to trauma and stress, which impact their mental health. **The urgent need for easy access to vital mental health support cannot be overstated.** Existing resources and support systems are insufficient, leaving actively serving and retired first responders struggling and in desperate need of help.

### UNDERSTANDING THE NEED

More than  
**1 in 5**  
first responders are suffering from post-traumatic stress

More than  
**85%**  
of first responders have experienced symptoms related to mental health conditions

First responders contemplate suicide nearly  
**10x**  
more than the typical American adult

Depression and PTSD are up to  
**5x**  
more common in first responders

Police officers and firefighters are  
**more likely**  
to die by suicide than in the line of duty

*According to the National Institute of Mental Health, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, and the Ruderman Family Foundation.*



**LIEUTENANT EDWARD REDISKE (RET)**  
Retired Virginia Law Enforcement Officer

### FIRST RESPONDER SPOTLIGHT

*"Throughout my career I handled every type of crime scene an officer can face. In the beginning, I was young and had an "I'm invincible" mindset. Every shift ended with "choir practice" and my days off were often spent in bed, unable to get up. I became increasingly depressed and turned to alcohol to make the day bearable. I never once asked or looked for help because "cops suck it up." One night, my wife came home to find me sitting in the rain in the back yard with my handgun and a bottle of whiskey. It wasn't easy and it didn't happen overnight, but I soon began to realize how much of my life and time with my family I had lost because I thought asking for help made me look weak. I found that the more I talked with a professional, the lighter I felt. The world seemed brighter. I would not be here today if I hadn't FINALLY gotten the help I needed."*



## The First FORWARD Center

The FORWARD Center will create a **safe, stigma-free space** for public safety professionals to seek support without fear of job-related consequences. Recognizing the need for flexibility, **in-person appointments and telemedicine options** will be offered.

The Foundation acknowledges the ongoing need for wellness services into retirement. Therefore, **support will be provided to active and retired first responders and their families**. Families serve together; **treatment will also be available to family members**.

The Foundation's Center in Northern Virginia will be the **first of several** FORWARD Center's in Virginia. Over the next decade, our plan is to open Center's throughout the Mid-Atlantic and Southeast regions, bringing the Foundation's resources to other states.

### HOLISTIC WELLNESS SERVICES & EDUCATION



Safe and confidential clinical care



Sleep and nutrition counseling



Meditation and mindfulness classes



Service dog placements and training



Financial education and counseling services



Spiritual care and pastoral counseling services



Evidence-based research

## KEY PARTNERSHIPS

Forge Health VA

Boulder Crest VA

OPTA Financial

Mutts With a Mission

The David Lynch Foundation

Nova Southeastern University

Harbor of Grace Enhanced Recovery

*Our passion comes from our own careers as first responders. With over 70 years' experience, we have seen the impact of repeated exposure to trauma and the results of normalizing its effects. We take pride in validating our services with comprehensive evidence-based research and preserving the confidentiality of those who walk through our doors. Our FORWARD Centers will be a game changer for the first responder community.*

**MAGGIE A. DEBOARD**  
President and Co-Founder

**JAYSYN CARSON**  
Vice President and Co-Founder

## Help Establish the First FORWARD Center

The Foundation's leadership team is actively exploring building options and a physical location for the FORWARD Center in Northern Virginia. To ensure adequate space for the Foundation's plans, the Center will require a building with at least 15K square feet. It is imperative that the Center be in an accessible and moderately private location away from highly congested areas—most likely in Prince William, Loudoun, or Western Fairfax County.

More than a building, the Center will be a haven for first responders and their families. Inside the FORWARD Center, visitors will find a private clinical care wing, confidential counseling suites, multiple training rooms, and access to other behavioral and physical health services.

### FORWARD CENTER TIMELINE



## Invest in Our First Responders

Significant initial financial contributions are needed to establish the Foundation's first FORWARD Center. **An estimated \$5 million is needed to open the Center**, as well as ongoing financial support to ensure our long-term, sustained services.



Your contribution can make a life-changing difference for the brave men and women who dedicate their lives to keeping our communities safe. **With your help, we can ensure that every member of the first responder community has access to the confidential clinical treatment and resources they need to thrive.**

In recognition of your commitment, naming opportunities at the FORWARD Center will be available. Donors will have the opportunity to name a counseling suite, training room, or have their name on the FORWARD Center building.

*Together we are building a legacy of critical care for public safety professionals.*



**Please consider making a personally significant tax-exempt gift today.**

Pledges may be made over a three-year period (2024–2026). All gifts and pledges must be received by December 31, 2026.

### Get Connected

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### Social Media

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