

For Immediate Release

Monday, December 19, 2022

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Blaine Bergeson, Michael Lawton, Melanie Brown-Woofter, Lori Halpern, Melissa Larkin-Skinner and Jan Cairnes smile together on December 5, 2022.

Florida Behavioral Health Association Receives \$50,000 Grant from UnitedHealthcare and Optum to Support Providers in Post-Hurricane Ian Recovery

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.— UnitedHealthcare and Optum, the businesses of UnitedHealth Group, have awarded a \$50,000 grant to the Florida Behavioral Health Association (FBHA) to support FBHA's members with post-Hurricane Ian recovery. FBHA is Florida's largest trade association representing community treatment providers.

The grant will be used to help FBHA members in Southwest Florida rebuild and recover from the impact of Hurricane Ian while they also continuing to serve clients in the region. Six FBHA members employing over 500 staff were directly impacted in cities across Lee, Charlotte, and Collier counties.

“Our behavioral health provider agencies suffered physical damages to buildings, loss of electricity for days, loss of fuel supply, loss of generators, and devastatingly, staff even lost family members. Despite these hardships at work and at home, our staff came to work every day, spent hours walking through neighborhoods to check in on their clients, and never said ‘no’ when asked for help” said FBHA President and CEO Melanie Brown-Woofter. “The money that UnitedHealthcare and Optum have generously donated will help our members get back on their feet so they can continue to help the community heal.”

“UnitedHealthcare and our partners at Optum are committed to supporting the recovery and wellbeing of Floridians who have been impacted by such a disastrous storm, and to ensuring continued access to high-quality health care in their local communities,” said Michael Lawton, CEO, UnitedHealthcare Community Plan of Florida.

“We are honored to join UnitedHealthcare in helping Florida’s behavioral health community recover from storm damage so that impacted providers and staff can continue delivering critical behavioral health services to those that need them,” added Lori Halpern, Senior Vice President, Government Solutions and Business Development for Optum Behavioral Health Solutions.

This grant is in addition to [a \\$1 million donation made earlier this year by the United Health Foundation](#), the philanthropic foundation of UnitedHealth Group, to help residents of Florida address urgent response needs following Hurricane Ian. UnitedHealthcare and Optum serve millions of Floridians through its benefits and health services businesses.

Floridians in need of assistance due to Hurricane Ian can take advantage of various support resources including FBHA’s members’ toll-free [helplines](#). The state of Florida emergency information line is 1-800-342-3557. In addition, First Lady Casey DeSantis along with the Florida Department of Children and Families created the [Family Support Line](#) to connect individuals who are struggling post-Hurricane Ian with Floridians who survived Hurricane Michael in the panhandle in 2018. That number is (888) 850-7935.

Optum’s free emotional-support help line, 1-866-447-3573, is open Monday-Friday, 9 a.m. – 9 p.m. ET. The service is free of charge and open to anyone. Callers may also receive referrals to community resources. Along with the toll-free help line, emotional-support resources and information are available online at www.liveandworkwell.com.

The [Centers for Disease Control](#) also offers tips for self-care following a traumatic event. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s [disaster distress helpline](#) is 1-800-985-5990. To respond to the effects of this storm, through a donation or by volunteering, please visit <https://www.volunteerflorida.org/donatefdf/>.

To continue to support FBHA’s members and their staff recovery from Hurricane Ian, consider donating to the organization’s Hurricane Ian Relief Fund [here](#).

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About the Florida Behavioral Health Association

FBHA is a non-profit organization that provides statewide leadership on behavioral health policy and practice. FBHA supports member agencies offering services to those in need of mental health and substance use disorder assistance and support. Its members include a broad range of provider types, ranging from small specialty organizations to comprehensive treatment organizations with multiple locations within a geographic region. For more information, please visit www.floridabha.org.

About UnitedHealthcare

UnitedHealthcare is dedicated to helping people live healthier lives and making the health system work better for everyone by simplifying the health care experience, meeting consumer health and wellness needs, and sustaining trusted relationships with care providers. In the United States, UnitedHealthcare offers the full spectrum of health benefit programs for individuals, employers, and Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries, and contracts directly with more than 1.5 million physicians and care professionals, and 7,000 hospitals and other care facilities nationwide. The company also provides health benefits and delivers care to people through owned and operated health care facilities in South America. UnitedHealthcare is one of the businesses of UnitedHealth Group (NYSE: UNH), a diversified health care company. For more information, visit UnitedHealthcare at www.uhc.com or follow @UHC on Twitter.

About Optum

Optum is a leading information and technology-enabled health services business dedicated to helping make the health system work better for everyone. With more than 210,000 people worldwide, Optum delivers intelligent, integrated solutions that help to modernize the health system and improve overall population health. Optum is part of UnitedHealth Group (NYSE: UNH). For more information, visit www.Optum.com.