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## **Local trauma surgeons training bystanders to assist during mass casualty incidents**

PENSACOLA, Fla. – Sacred Heart Medical Group trauma surgeons are on a mission to educate public school administrators, city officials and airport personnel on first-aid skills that can stop blood loss fatalities during a mass casualty incident.

Mass casualty incidents, like shootings in schools and other public places, have become a reality of life. Too often those on the front lines of these emergency situations are bystanders who lack the medical training and equipment to treat the victims, said Dr. Eric Roberts, a trauma surgeon at Sacred Heart Hospital in Pensacola.

“Children are the most vulnerable group and should be protected,” Roberts said. “These victims too often die from extremity wounds before medically-trained emergency responders can arrive at the scene. Training bystanders to become first responders could save countless lives.”

Stop the Bleed is a campaign developed by the Department of Homeland Security after the Sandy Hook mass school shooting in 2012 to empower the public to become trained and equipped to help stop bleeding before professional help arrives.

According to data from Gun Violence Archive, a nonprofit research group that tracks gun violence, the state of Florida experienced a total of 51 mass shootings between June 12, 2016, to June 12, 2018. Of those incidents, 118 died and 280 were injured.

Roberts said as a father to two school-aged children and a wife who has taught in public school, this initiative hits close to home. He and his colleagues were compelled to reach out to community leaders to educate them about the proper techniques that can stop blood loss from a mass casualty or accident.

“Unfortunately, this is our new reality and we must prepare for the inevitable,” he said. “As a trauma surgeon, we treat these types of injuries, but we can’t save people if they die from their injuries on the field.”

Before the start of the school year, Roberts met with Escambia Superintendent Malcolm Thomas and gave a 45-minute bleeding control presentation to 400 school district administrators on how to correctly use tourniquets and compressions during a bleeding emergency. Following the presentation, he participated in an active shooter drill in conjunction with the Pensacola Police Department.

He is in talks with several agencies about training personnel in life-saving techniques, including the Escambia county sheriff’s office and police department, Pensacola Airport and Santa Rosa Island Authority. Roberts urges healthcare professionals to become Bleeding Control instructors by taking an hour-long basic course sponsored by the American College of Surgeons.

### **About Sacred Heart Health System**

In Florida, Ascension operates Sacred Heart Health System based in Pensacola and St. Vincent’s HealthCare based in Jacksonville. Together, Ascension operates seven hospitals in Florida and more than 100 other sites of care, and they employ more than 10,000 associates. Across the region, Sacred Heart and St. Vincent’s have served North Florida communities for more than 145 years. In fiscal year 2017, they provided \$168 million in

community benefit and care of persons living in poverty. Ascension ([www.ascension.org](http://www.ascension.org)) is a faith-based healthcare organization dedicated to transformation through innovation across the continuum of care. As the largest non-profit health system in the U.S. and the world's largest Catholic health system, Ascension is committed to delivering compassionate, personalized care to all, with special attention to persons living in poverty and those most vulnerable. Ascension includes approximately 156,000 associates and 34,000 aligned providers. Ascension's Healthcare Division operates more than 2,600 sites of care – including 151 hospitals and more than 50 senior living facilities – in 21 states and the District of Columbia, while its Solutions Division provides a variety of services and solutions including physician practice management, venture capital investing, investment management, biomedical engineering, facilities management, clinical care management, information services, risk management, and contracting through Ascension's own group purchasing organization. For more information on Sacred Heart Health System, visit [www.sacred-heart.org](http://www.sacred-heart.org). ###