

**ADVISORY FOR MEDIA NEEDING EXPERTS FROM  
CLARITY CHILD GUIDANCE CENTER  
TO ADDRESS CHILDREN’S MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES**

Not a day goes by when children’s mental health isn’t in the news—and sadly—it’s usually not positive.

San Antonio-based Clarity Child Guidance Center--the only nonprofit in South Texas providing a continuum of mental health care for children ages 3-17 and their families to manage conditions ranging from ADHD and anxiety to suicidal ideation, bipolar disorder and/or schizophrenia—is indeed experiencing a 27% increase in inpatient hospitalizations, 19% increase in children who were suicidal, a 65% increase in inpatient treatment of kids that have never been seen in the mental health system before, and a 159% increase in the crisis services department. (More on Clarity below.)

If you ever need a Clarity CGC mental health professional (psychiatrist, psychologist, counselor, RN) to offer expertise or comment on what is making the news (and what the Clarity team is experiencing in San Antonio/south Texas), please do not hesitate to contact me at [jca@jeannebiz.com](mailto:jca@jeannebiz.com) or 210-392-9047. Bilingual spokespersons are also available.

List of topics that Jessica Knudsen, LCSW, FACHE, CEO and President of Clarity Child Guidance Center, can comment or write about. Since joining Clarity CGC in 2019, she has successfully guided the nonprofit organization through the alarming negative effects in children’s social development, academic development, and emotional health due to the pandemic, which caused an equally alarming need for Clarity’s services. Because of the ever-rising needs of its 8,000 children served annually, Knudsen is now guiding Clarity through an expansion of beds and facilities for its hospital and Crisis Assessment Services unit offering specialized inpatient and outpatient treatment for children. Knudsen is a Texas Hospital Association Leadership Fellow, and a member of Leadership San Antonio (Class 46). She received a Master of Science in Social Work from the University of Texas at Austin, and a Bachelor of Science in Psychology from University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She came to Clarity CGC from Holly Hill Hospital, one of North Carolina’s leading psychiatric and addiction treatment facilities for children and adults. Knudsen resides in San Antonio with her husband and school-age twins.

**Timely Topics**

- November/December/Holidays
  - International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day – Nov 23
  - National Stress Awareness Day – Nov 1
  - Seasonal Depression Awareness - December
  - New Year’s Eve - Recap the year and celebrate the victories; look forward to 2024
  - Holidays
    - Ways to reduce the anxiety of the holidays
    - Helping your children navigate the holidays after divorce
    - Parenting through the winter break and starting the new year strong
- February:

- Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month - sex trafficking a huge problem in central Texas; homeless teens big target; online trafficking major problem
- March:
  - Self-Harm Awareness Month
- April:
  - National Child Abuse Prevention Month - generational
  - Month of the Military Child (Purple Up)
  - Every Kid Health Week (April 24-28, 2023) – Key message: can't be physically healthy if not mentally healthy. Unhealthy mental health causes kids to be physically unhealthy
- May:
  - TeensDaySA—proclamation by Mayor on May 20, 2023 – “a Summit for Learning Among Youth, to celebrate the brilliance, grit, and health of young people in San Antonio”
  - National Children’s Mental Health Awareness Day – May 7
  - Children’s Mental Health Awareness Week – May 7 - 13
  - Mental Health Awareness Month
  - National Trauma Awareness Month
  - National Trauma Survivors Day – May 17
  - Teacher Appreciation Week
  - Nurses Week
  - School’s Out
- June/July/August:
  - PTSD Awareness Month
  - PTSD Awareness Day – June 27
  - International Self-care Month - June 24 - July 24
  - International Self-care Day - July 24
  - National Grief Awareness Day – August 30
- National Suicide Prevention Month (and Week) - September
- October
  - Mental Illness Awareness Week – Oct 1 – 7
  - National Depression Screening Day – Oct 5
  - World Mental Health Day – Oct 10
  - National Bullying Awareness Month

#### SUICIDE - SELF-HARM - TRAUMA

- Trauma – 90% of kids in psychiatric hospitals have trauma. Clarity going through year-long certification for “trauma-informed” care that involves all staff; want care to reach all staff as well as patients
- Self-harm
- ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences) i.e., potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood such as experiencing or witnessing violence, abuse, or neglect. The less people are treated early on, the higher the struggles later on.
- Suicide big issue yearlong for kids; national awareness happens in September
- Suicide Prevention
- Understanding self-harm and the difference with suicidal ideation/attempts
- Is The Emergency Room the Best Choice for Your Child's Mental Illness Crisis?

#### WARNING SIGNS

- Warning signs to look for in your children and how tell the difference between “growing pains” and anxiety or depression

- Answers to the question asked the most by parents: “where do I start?” A lot of times parents don’t know the process of getting their child the help they need. They have questions about their insurance and if services will be covered. Questions about what resources they can find at their school to help their child. Questions about what to do if their child is in crisis and where to go? Do I go to the ER? Do I go straight to a specialized treatment center like Clarity that focuses on mental health and children/teens.

## CARETAKERS

- Strength Amid the Stress: Nurturing Yourself and Your Spouse

## GENERAL

- Seeing some bright spots now: Not as much stigma about mental health issues; People more truthful; Celebrities coming out with their own struggles
- Teens and The Technology Trap
- The Undue Pressure of Being Picture-Perfect
- What causes mental illness in children?
- Difficult Behaviors
- Helping Your Teen Care About Mental Wellness
- Talking to Kids About Death
- ODD versus character development problems
- What you need to know about bullying – including cyberbullying. Parents need to create safety plan
- Ways to help children who are struggling with mental health/illness

## MISCONCEPTIONS

- Correcting mental health myths – understanding the brain
- Correct common misconception that mental illness impacts only certain groups of people. Mental illness does not discriminate. It impacts everyone. Everyone has mental health, and we all can handle it in different ways. Some people can manage it very well while others are not.
- Correct misconception that everyone should be able to recognize when a child is struggling with a mental health issue. It is not always easy to see or recognize the warning signs. Sometime people see certain behaviors and think “well, that’s them just being moody or a typical kid” when really, they are struggling.
- Fallacy that very young children cannot be mentally ill. Reality is it’s hard for parents to find counselors that even treat 3–4-year-olds. At Clarity, they have 14 beds for 3–9-year-olds and they are always full