

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

**Clarity Child Guidance Center Breaks Ground on Vital Renovations to
Increase Capacity and Improve Care**

Methodist Healthcare Ministries Announces \$1 Million Gift for Capital Campaign

San Antonio, TX: [Clarity Child Guidance Center](#) broke ground during a special ceremony on Wednesday, September 20, 2023, on renovations being made possible through its “[HEROES: The Campaign for Clarity](#).” When complete, this \$16 million capital campaign will allow Clarity to serve an additional 1,000 kids a year—bringing the annual total to an annual average of 9,000 children and teens--ensuring that every child and family who needs behavioral health services can receive them. Currently, about 60% of children treated at Clarity are uninsured, underinsured or low-income.

At the groundbreaking event, Methodist Healthcare Ministries’ board chair Lavonne Garrison announced that MHM is contributing \$1 million to Clarity’s capital campaign. Tony LoBasso, COO of Methodist Healthcare Ministries and Board Chair for Clarity Child Guidance Center, said, “Our kids are our future, and we have to make sure that they have access to care....to put the stigma of behavioral health behind and make sure there is a caring environment where they and their family can be served.”

Jessica Knudsen, LCSW, FACHE, CEO and President of Clarity Child Guidance Center, cited school violence, the isolation of the pandemic, and subsequent return to the classroom as reasons why there’s an increase in demand for services. “We jumped from three to four walk-ins a day to now we have 20 per day. These are not referrals; these are not emergency rooms calling us.....these are families walking in saying, ‘I need help right now and I don’t know where else to go,’” Knudsen states. “We are so appreciative to all our supporters that have helped us kick off our campaign to significantly serve more children. The \$1 million gift from Methodist Healthcare Ministries was pivotal in moving forward with this much needed expansion. “

Bexar County Judge Peter Sakai and District 8 Councilman Manny Pelaez publicly reaffirmed their commitment to youth mental health for San Antonio area. Judge Sakai stated “I’m well aware of the escalating needs in the community and I think the community recognizes that COVID was a once-in-a-lifetime crisis, and it continues. The impact of COVID has been devastating, which means we have to double down and add more resources for mental health to care especially those in need.”

Councilman Pelaez added, “I thank God every single day that there are people like the folks who work at Clarity who make the difference for these kids. There is no doubt in my mind that for the first time ever, you have a city council who, in unison, now speak the language of mental health and trauma-informed care. We are making sure that we don’t just deliver streets, sidewalks, parks, drainage and an airport, but also deliver an ecosystem where everybody has that right to live, work and play. And that those who are most brittle and vulnerable can also reclaim that right to live work and play.”

Clarity has experienced a 159% increase in the crisis services department; 86% increase in the number of patients admitted and placed on suicide risk precautions; 65% increase in inpatient treatment of kids that have

never been seen in the mental health system before; 27% increase in inpatient hospitalizations; and 89% increase in law enforcement referrals.

The capital campaign will be funded in three phases. Completion of the expansion depends on funding but will realistically take four to five years.

Phase One, estimated to cost \$6.5 million, is \$1.7 away from being fully funded; construction started Aug. 28, 2023, after 70% of funds were secured—including the \$1 million from MHM—and should be completed by early summer of 2024.

- Phase One will include the renovation of an existing building into an eight-bed Pediatric Psychiatric Intensive Care Unit (PPICU) with trauma-informed space dedicated to children with very complex trauma, a secured courtyard and a dedicated space for programming. These expanded services will serve at least an additional 700 children per year.
- Phase One will also update and expand the kitchen, originally built in 1986, to feed 125 patients
- The expansion of phase one will require about 15 additional staff, including nurses, therapists and additional housekeeping.

Phase Two will cost about \$3.7 million to finish the third floor of the existing Outpatient Building to allow more therapists, psychiatrists and psychologists to schedule 4,500 more outpatient appointments annually.

- Southwest Psychiatric Physicians will relocate to this space. Presently—even before Phase Two—Clarity offers the region's largest concentration of child and adolescent psychiatrists through its onsite affiliations with Southwest Psychiatric Physicians and UT Health San Antonio
- Clarity will also expand the Next Step program—where families “receive rapid access appointments, urgent care assessments, and evaluations with a licensed clinician—to increase space and accessibility.
- Construction on Phase Two is expected to begin when funding for that phase is 70% complete.

Phase Three will cost \$3.6 million and will expand the crisis services department, adding two additional observation rooms and expanding the lobby, allowing Clarity to assess an additional 60 kids in crisis/month.

- “We jumped from three to four walk-ins a day to now we have 20 per day. Those are not referrals; those are not emergency rooms calling us....those are families simply walking in saying, ‘I need help right now and I don’t know where else to go,’” Knudsen said. “We are overflowing. There are nights that all six of our crisis bays are full.”

Background:

The U.S. Surgeon General’s [recent advisory](#) warned that mental health challenges are the leading cause of disability and poor life outcomes in young people, with up to 1 in 5 children ages 3 to 17 in the U.S. having a mental, emotional, developmental or behavioral disorder. In Texas, more than 67% of children who need treatment never receive it—even though 25% have onset by age 7—due to three barriers: a lack of service providers where they live; stigma around mental health; and the ability to pay for services.

60 percent of the children served by Clarity are uninsured, underinsured, or low-income, making the organization even more a valuable resource for the community given the barriers that exist in accessing care. The barriers to care compound a troubling trend among area youth. The San Antonio Teen Mental Health Survey conducted in the spring 2022, found that 37% of youth expressed an inability to perform day to day tasks and 49% stated feeling helpless, hopeless, numb, or like nothing matters.

ABOUT CLARITY CHILD GUIDANCE CENTER: Founded in 1886, [Clarity Child Guidance Center](#) is the only nonprofit in South Texas providing a continuum of mental health services for children ages 3-17 and their families to manage mental health conditions ranging from depression and anxiety to suicidal ideation, bipolar disorder and/or schizophrenia. In keeping with its vision to ensure that every child and family that needs its

services receives its services, Clarity maintains a stand-alone mental health hospital on an eight-acre kid-friendly, open campus, with 66-bed, four-unit inpatient hospital with a six-bed Crisis Services unit offering specialized treatment for children. It serves more than 8,000 children annually in need of care, regardless of their family's ability to pay; the majority of patients are disproportionately low-income. It offers the region's largest concentration of child and adolescent psychiatrists through onsite affiliations with Southwest Psychiatric Physicians and UT Health San Antonio; it is also a teaching hospital for the esteemed nursing schools of UT Health San Antonio *and* University of Incarnate Word.

For more information, contact outreach@claritycgc.org or 210-582-6442.