

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Clarity Child Guidance Center History and Timeline**

*Center Celebrated 135 years in 2021*

Founded in 1886, [Clarity Child Guidance Center](#) is the only nonprofit in South Texas providing a continuum of mental health care for children and adolescents, ages 3-17, who are experiencing a range of emotional, mental, and behavioral illnesses from ADHD and anxiety to suicidal ideation, bipolar disorder and/or schizophrenia.

Services at the facilities include crisis services, inpatient treatment, partial hospitalization, outpatient therapies, case management for families, medication management, and art, music and play therapy.

Clarity CGC offers the region's largest concentration of child and adolescent psychiatrists, with its onsite affiliation with Southwest Psychiatric Physicians and UT Health San Antonio. In addition, the center serves as a teaching hospital for the esteemed nursing schools of University of Incarnate Word and UT Health San Antonio. Clarity CGC's treatment network includes an eight-acre campus in the South Texas Medical Center with a 66-bed hospital with a six-bed Crisis Services unit offering specialized treatment for children, and an observation area that is staffed with mental health professionals 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Clarity CGC serves children in need, regardless of their family's ability to pay.

### **HISTORY TIMELINE**

1886 – Thirteen women met in San Antonio to establish a home for orphaned children and called it The Home for Destitute Children. The first location was at 217 Sixth Street and was rented for \$30 a month, using donations from San Antonio philanthropist Col. George Washington Brackenridge. Six children were placed.

1887- 1888 - State charter was obtained on 2-2-1887 for THE HOME FOR DESTITUTE CHILDREN. In July 1888, charter amended to PROTESTANT HOME FOR DESTITUTE CHILDREN; organization moved to its second home at 815 San Pedro Avenue.

1890 - Organization moved to its third home—a large three-story home at 802 Kentucky Avenue to accommodate the growing number of children that needed services. A chapel, hospital and two sleeping porches were added. From 1890 – 1924, the staff cared for over 3,400 children. House was built in 1870 and was a gift of Gen. G. N. Russ; it was designed by noted Texas architect James Riely Gordon. The building was designated a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark in 1991.

1924 - Number of children needing care grew significantly and larger quarters were needed, so a campaign was launched to raise funds for a new building to be erected on 50 acres of land on Woodlawn Avenue. Donations of \$250,000 paid for the construction of new building that could hold 100 boys, 100 girls and 50 babies.

1926 - Organization moved to its fourth home at 3031 W. Woodlawn Avenue. Admission policy remained the same: a home was provided for children who were needy, neglected or orphaned.

1927 - Charter amendment in December changed name to PROTESTANT ORPHANS HOME OF SAN ANTONIO.

1929 - First staff of doctors included Dr. T. J. Walthall; home opened an infirmary of 30 beds on November 23.

1931 - State Board of Education declared the Protestant Orphan's Home an independent school district.

1943 - The Protestant Orphan's Home of San Antonio receives nonprofit, tax-exempt designation.

1950 - Charter amendment changes name to PROTESTANT CHILDREN'S HOME OF SAN ANTONIO.

1956 - Community Guidance Center (CGC) opened in May on 217 South Presa St. in home of Miss DeRossette Thomas, with seven staff members after a 10-year effort by the Mental Health Association of Bexar County. CGC treated emotional illnesses in children up to age 17; provided consultant services to other agencies.

1960s - Responding to community needs, the Protestant Children's Home transitioned from orphanage to residential treatment facility for emotionally disturbed youth. The building at 3031 Woodlawn was sold and used to build five home-like cottages on the home's fifth location at 2939 W. Woodlawn, where youth resided for long term treatment. Maximum capacity was 60 children/teens who stayed from 6 months to two years. The children lived at the home on weekdays and returned home to their families on weekends. Because the facility was not being used by patients on weekends, it was used for respite care.

1962 - Protestant Children's Home became self-administering. In December, the first school was established on the grounds with a teacher provided by the San Antonio ISD.

Community Guidance Center moved to 2135 Babcock Rd, mainly offering family therapy, with seven new family evaluations weekly. CGC opened an outpatient unit at the Robert B. Green Hospital in 1969, and within six months had provided services to 100 children.

1965 - The Protestant Children's Home was self-sufficient agency with its own therapy team and a treatment center including five cottages, swimming pool, tennis courts, playroom and gymnasium.

1971 - Arnold Parker, then director of food services, made a cookie the size of a dinner plate for a young boy who was leaving the inpatient program. They presented the boy with the huge cookie, and seeing how special it was for him, decided to lovingly make each child their own special treat when they complete inpatient treatment, beginning the "discharge cookie" tradition which continues to this day.

1972 - Charter amendment changed the existence of the corporation to "perpetual," and changed the name to SAN ANTONIO CHILDREN'S CENTER.

1970s - A need had developed for more intensive, psychiatric treatment in hospital setting so the San Antonio Children's Center formalized an agreement with University of Texas Health Science Center to become an affiliate teaching hospital and became licensed as a private psychiatric hospital – the only one in South Texas. A formal affiliation agreement was signed between the Community Guidance Center board and the Board of Regents of UTHSC to forge a closer relationship with the Medical School. Psychiatry Residents and Psychology Interns from the Medical School began to rotate at both the Community Guidance Center and San Antonio Children's Center.

In late 1970s and early 1980s, 16 beds were added to the brought more changes to SA Children's Center, and an informal agreement with Community Guidance Center provided outpatient services, while the San Antonio Children's Center provided inpatient services.

1986 - A wide range of mental health services, including comprehensive diagnostic services, acute care/crisis intervention programs, moderate and long-term care for chronic or difficult to treat patients and outpatient services were offered between centers. The affiliation with the medical school resulted in national recognition for both its training program in child psychiatry and its research activities in the causes and treatments of psychiatric disorders appearing in childhood and adolescence.

1988 - San Antonio Children's Center expands to a second location at 8535 Tom Slick Drive in medical center area and provides expanded services, a clinical and administrative office building, a living unit, dining hall, and activity education complex. The Tom Slick campus provided services only to acute patients, while the children in residential care remained at the Woodlawn campus

1990 - Charter amendment changed name from SAN ANTONIO CHILDREN'S CENTER to SOUTHWEST NEUROPSYCHIATRIC INSTITUTE to build on national recognition for training program in child psychiatry and research activities in the causes and treatments of psychiatric disorders appearing in childhood.

1994 - The Southwest Psychiatric Physicians group was formed, providing psychiatric services for the Institute.

1995 - Charter amendment changed name from SOUTHWEST NEUROPSYCHIATRIC INSTITUTE to SOUTHWEST MENTAL HEALTH CENTER.

1997 - United Way presented multiple Pacesetter Awards to the organization for outstanding leadership.

2000 – Because acute inpatient care was more consistent with the mission of Southwest Mental Health Center, the Woodlawn facility was closed (and eventually became home of The Children's Shelter).

2001 - Southwest Mental Health Center added 12 beds to the existing 40-bed hospital, increasing inpatient service capacity by 30 percent.

2002 - Therapeutic recreation program expands at SMHC with addition of playground funded by Charity Ball Association and ROPES Course.

2003- SMHC completes \$850,000 capital campaign to expand and renovate its 52-bed living units.

2007 - SMHC adopts Claritycare, an innovative, groundbreaking approach of care, founded on the values of dignity, respect and understanding, and on the belief that children and their families want to overcome their problems, but many don't know how.

2009 - Southwest Mental Health Center and Child Guidance Center merge under the name of Southwest Mental Health Center. In 2010 charter amendment changes name to CLARITY CHILD GUIDANCE CENTER.

2013 - Clarity Child Guidance Center launches One in Five Minds with a goal of raising awareness about mental illness and breaking down stigma. The advocacy campaign includes an outreach program for military families and a pilot for educators. Clarity CGC sponsors and organizes the first Children's Mental Health Summit for professionals; this summit was renamed [Claritycon](#) in 2014 and has become a major annual training event that continues to this day, without interruption (even during Covid).

2014 – 2019 - First Clarity Child Guidance outpatient clinic opened in Westover Hills; closed in 2019 and relocated to main Tom Slick campus.

2015 - Clarity CGC expanded its services with the Mays Family Gymnasium and Therapeutic Recreation Center, and a new Partial Hospitalization / Day Treatment center with a 30-patient capacity, allowing children to receive treatment during the day and return home at night. Clarity further expanded its UT Health-San Antonio partnership by providing preceptor and training support for the Nurse Practitioner program; hired psychiatric nurse practitioner. Most local nursing schools rotated students on the main campus to gain additional skills.

2016 - Completion of a capital improvement project at the Tom Slick campus increased hospital beds from 40 to 66 and opened a first-of-its-kind 24-hour Crisis Assessment Center. In partnership with the Division of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry at UT Health Science Center, it also opened a new three-story Outpatient facility.

2018 – 2019 - Clarity created a care coordination department (later called The [Next Steps Center](#)) to provide more effective utilization of health services for children at high risk of harm to self and others, as well as to reduce the need for re-admission. Other initiatives included [military parents awareness campaign](#) with the support of The USAA Foundation; BaseCampus pilot for educators with the help of the H.E. Butt Foundation; and volunteer programs including [Food for the Soul](#), [Bridge the Gap](#) and [Be the Link](#). Partnership with Baylor College of Medicine allowed pediatric residents to rotate through Clarity hospital.

2020 - Opening of four psychiatric emergency services beds in Clarity CGC's observation unit, in partnership with University Health System and Southwest Texas Regional Advisory Council's 24-hour regional communication center (STRAC-MEDCOM).

- Created "[First Step](#)<sup>TM</sup>" appointments—a one-time consultation by a psychological testing technician that gives caregivers a professional recommendation about service(s) a child or family may need when a child's behavior escalates from age-appropriate challenges to mental health disturbances requiring professional help.
- COVID 19 initiatives included deployment of telehealth for all outpatient services; continuation of all inpatient and crisis services with safety precautions; published crisis response content for parents on website; and deployed Parents Chat webinars and virtual Strong Minds Happy Heart events.
- Claritycon was transformed into Claritycon Reimagined –with four mini-conferences instead of one—and partnered with studio of KLRN-PBS TV to offer three options to participants: in-person, live-virtual, and on-demand.

2021 - 135<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Clarity Child Guidance Center celebrated.

- Claritycon Reimagined continued –with four mini-conferences instead of one—in the studio of KLRN-PBS TV to offer CEUs and three options for participation: in-person, live-virtual, and on-demand.
- COVID unit created to allow for asymptomatic COVID positive patients to receive behavioral health treatment with their peer group while avoiding additional spread. Offered free weekly Parents Chats with a mental health professional; telehealth counseling sessions and teacher programs during the time of COVID.
- Continued Next Step Center to assist families with navigating the behavioral health system.
- Unit 3 Specialty unit developed for the treatment of children and adolescents with higher acuity.

2022 – Clarity committed to being a "Trauma Informed Care Certified Facility" – a 24-month campus wide process.

- Reacted swiftly after the tragic school shooting in Uvalde: 22 staff volunteers covered shifts at Uvalde Memorial Hospital; five volunteered at a grief camp at Morgan's Wonderland. Coordinated a program funded by HEB for children, families, and Uvalde CISD community offering inpatient psychiatric support that includes telehealth assessments and trauma informed transportation.
- Ramped up security measures on our campus including fencing, ten additional exterior cameras, and security personnel patrols.
- Underwrote and presented Claritycon – its two-day children's mental health conference with 40+ renowned experts educating 300+ educators, therapists, physicians, social workers, childcare workers and community members.

2023 – In July 2023, 400+ children's mental health professionals gathered at the JW Marriott San Antonio Hill Country Resort to hear vital presentations from 40 renowned experts about issues challenging today's area youth (and the professionals that serve them) during [Claritycon 2023](#)—the annual children's mental health conference that Clarity Child Guidance Center has sponsored since 2013.

**The mission continues.**