

# Developing a Community Model to Reduce Emergency Visits for Mental Health Care: A Quality Improvement Project

Tracy Gemmell, Sarah Locken, Kelsey Trepczyk



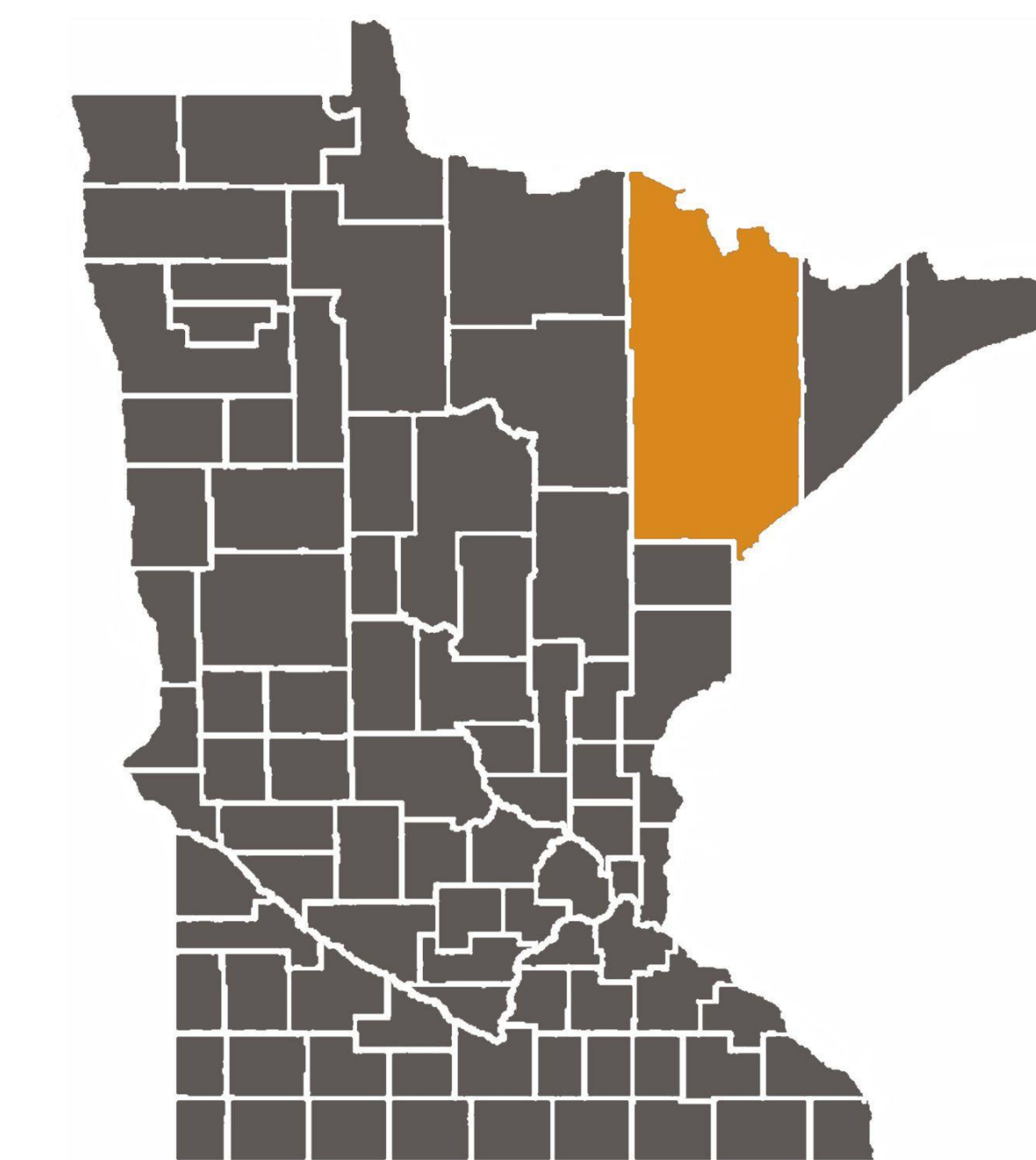
School of Nursing  
The College of St. Scholastica

## Problem & Significance

According to the National Alliance of Mental Illness (2020), one in five Americans experience a mental illness each year, and of that, only 43.8% of those received treatment. Individuals are often brought into the Emergency Department (ED) for their care and Laderman, et al. (2018) found that those visits resulted in decreased patient satisfaction, poor outcomes, and increased morbidity. In St. Louis County, Minnesota, services for mental health needs and crisis intervention are severely lacking, leading to high depression and suicide rates. The “Clarity Center for Well Being” is in the early structuring phase of how the county and community will work together to offer a wide variety of services to address accessibility, destigmatize mental health, and implement a new behavioral health crisis center in Duluth, MN (St. Louis County Minnesota, 2019).

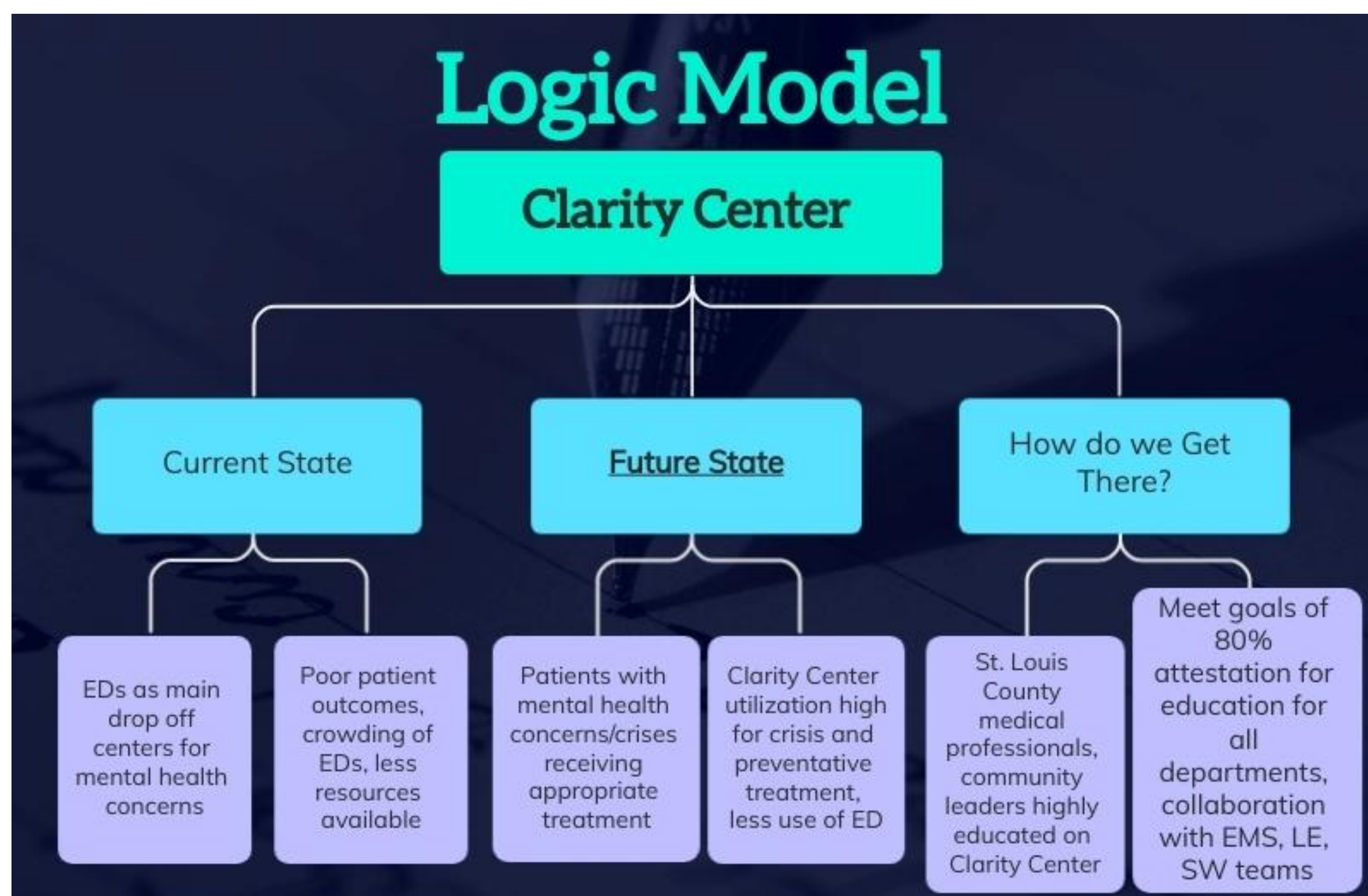
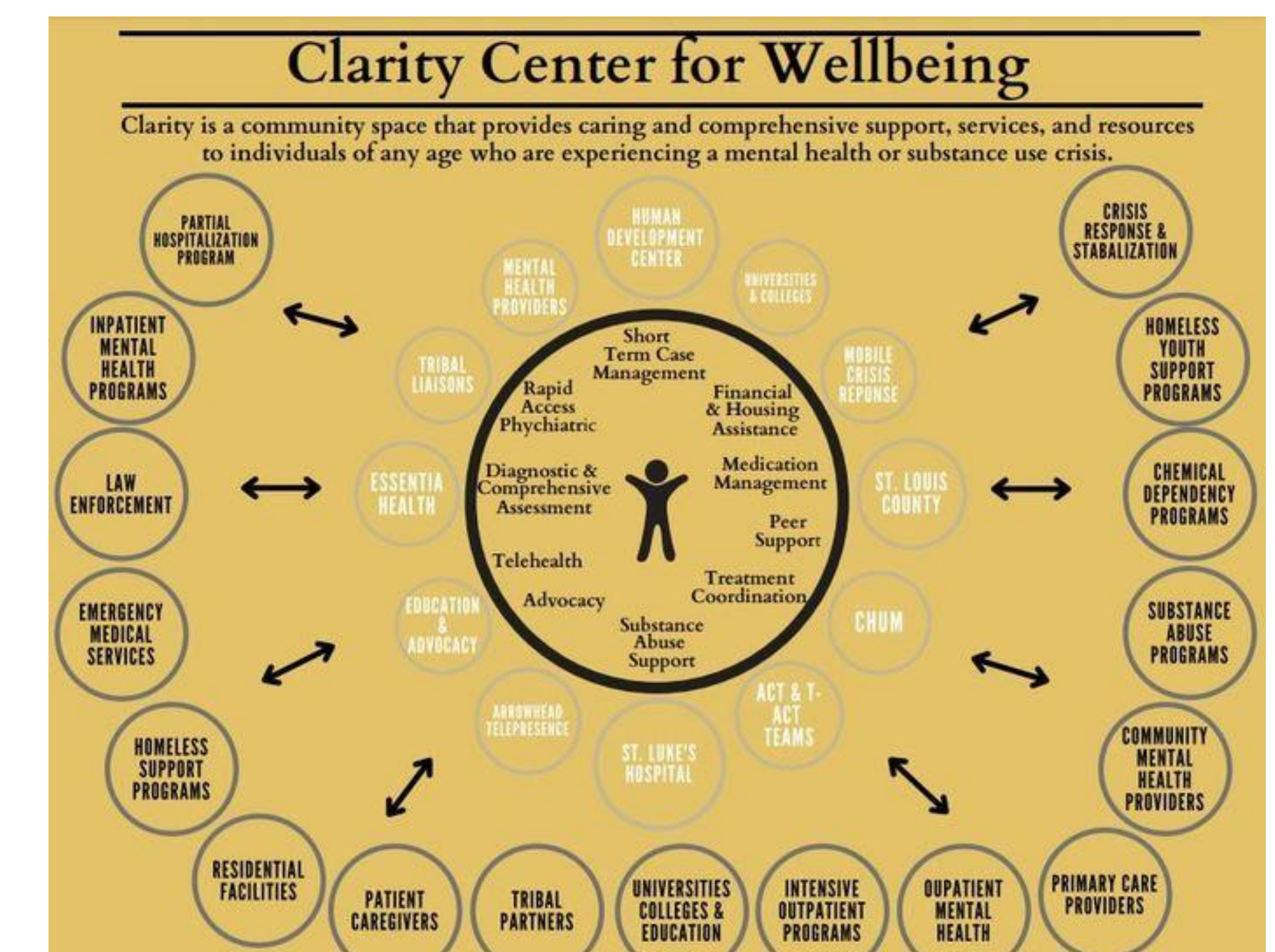
## Literature & Theoretical Framework

Those with mental health disorders have been found to visit the ED five times more often than those without a psychiatric diagnosis leading to increased financial burden, negative healthcare experiences, and unintended consequences related to mental health stigma and criminalization (Digel Vandyk et al., 2018). Through the literature review, two nursing theories were found that are relevant to this project. First, Ball’s Middle Range Theory on crisis care applies both to providing background on the Clarity Center for Wellbeing as a whole, as well as outlines how crisis care for those with severe mental illness can be addressed at the center. The second theory of focus is the Theory of Nursing for the Whole Person (TNWP). This theory emphasizes the significance of treating people without a one-size-fits-all approach.



## Specific Goals

The overall goal of this project is the creation of an outreach tool and associated educational materials for key stakeholders that will ultimately guide in assessing individuals during a mental health crisis that may be best served by the Clarity Center, as well as provide overall knowledge about the Clarity Center to stakeholders throughout the county.



## Impact & Sustainability

Evaluation following the opening of the Clarity Center and its impact on ED use and use of resources in mental health crises will be needed in the future. Additional projects could be conducted to further educate the community based on resource utilization after the center opens.



## Measures & Results

Following successful implementation via a narrated powerpoint presentation, surveys were sent to approximately 485 participants throughout St. Louis County. Surveys were collected, reviewed, and overall participation was measured via attestation of completion counts. In total, 19% completed the attestations and surveys by our deadline date. However, this number does not take into account those who completed the education without the attestation, such as in a group presentation setting. Successful future outcomes can be appraised by way of Clarity Center usage, referral numbers, decrease in overall ED visits, and decreased length of stay for mental health crises in the ER.