The University of St. Francis Health and Wellness Center:  
**Assuring Affordable, Quality Care**

**The Challenge:**
A comprehensive community needs assessment showed health care – including mental health care – was among the top 10 needs in Will County, IL. Access to affordable care was a particular concern for households with annual incomes below $50,000.

**The Goal:**
Improve access to quality primary health care services for the poor and uninsured, and develop/implement a model of nurse-managed primary health care integrating both physical and mental health assessment, treatment and follow-up services.

**An Innovative Solution:**
The University of St. Francis Health and Wellness Center (HWC) – the first nurse-managed primary health care center in Joliet

**What It Is**
- Model program demonstrating integration of mental health and physical treatment and follow-up into the traditional primary health care services of a nurse-managed center. Exemplifies new nursing model of affordable holistic primary care services, with integration of mental/physical primary care regardless of employment status or income.
- Founded and managed by a team of advanced practice nurses—nurse practitioners and clinical nurse specialists—who, through weekly team meetings, provide input and share perspectives on case management and approaches to care.
- Patient base are the place-bound elderly and disabled, victims of domestic violence, the working poor and uninsured. Most common health problems are hypertension, major depressive disorder, anxiety, diabetes, obesity and adult asthma.

**What It Does**
- Offers walk-in scheduling and evening hours for greater accessibility. Uninsured patients pay on a sliding scale based on income. Special arrangements are made for residents of local homeless and domestic violence shelters.
- In a “one-stop” approach to meeting health needs, a psychiatric mental health clinical nurse specialist provides follow-up on mental health screenings, onsite psychotherapy, psychiatric evaluations and assessments, prescriptive services, consultation and medication monitoring services; a social worker offers a full array of social services.
How It Stands Out

- Clinical outcomes:
  - In first year of operation, it provided care to more than 500 patients, with approximately 1,600 patients’ visits/encounters.
  - 100% of HWC patients receive clinical depression screening at intake; mental health screening algorithm created by one of the founders guides additional mental health screening for anxiety, eating disorders, child abuse and domestic violence and substance abuse, as indicated.
  - Provides breast exams, women’s health counseling, asthma screenings, immunizations, flu shots, parenting education, exercise classes, grief, diet and nutrition counseling, mental health counseling, episodic illness care, school and sports physicals, chronic disease management, well baby and well child examinations.
  - Patient surveys indicate 100% satisfaction with treatment.

- Financial outcomes:
  - Five-year Nursing Education, Practice and Retention grant of $2.1 million provides funding to manage, staff, and operate the HWC. It has also received a $50,000 grant for clinic equipment from Harrah’s casino, a $10,000 grant from Kiwanis international to stock and open a satellite clinic at a domestic violence shelter, and a $9,955 grant from the Will County Community Foundation to provide hearing and vision screenings.
  - Long-term goal is financial sustainability. HWC is a recognized Blue Cross and Blue Shield, Humana, Medicare and Medicaid provider – receiving 5% of income from private insurance, 10% from Medicare, 13% from cash payment and 72% from the State of Illinois.
  - All uninsured patients needing expensive medications are helped to apply for prescription assistance through pharmaceutical companies. This represents a projected cost-savings of $2,880 annually for a patient taking one tablet daily of a medication such as Quetapine ($8.00/tablet).
  - The social worker enrolls HWC child patients who are uninsured in the State of Illinois “All Kids” insurance program for the 250,000 children in Illinois without health insurance.
  - The HWC has evaluated and treated 83 patients with mental health diagnoses in its first year of operation, 12 of them were treated for severe mental illness. Since the average charge per discharge from a hospital’s psychiatric unit for one episode of psychosis is $12,890 (Tommy G. Thompson Report to Congress, 2002), this represents a projected cost savings of $154,680 for helping these patients maintain function and avoid hospitalization.

- Recognized by the Illinois Nurses Association (INA) for implementing an innovative model of health care delivery that increased access while promoting high quality, cost-effective health care.