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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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*Caption: Nelle Rhicard, Graphic Recorder, watches facilitator Elissa Hansen of Northspan Group, Inc. as she asks the participants to categorize action steps addressing behavioral healthcare.*

## **Mental and Behavioral Healthcare Needs in Itasca County Wilderness Health Hosts Community Listening Sessions**

Cohasset, Minn. - Mental and behavioral health needs remain a challenge throughout the state of Minnesota, and the unique needs of rural Minnesotans require targeted attention. To learn more about the needs of residents of Itasca County, Wilderness Health invited community members to share their stories and help shape the future of mental health care. The listening session was held on Monday, July 29th at the Bass Brook Community Center in Cohasset, MN. This was the fifth event in a series held across Northeastern Minnesota.

Attendees shared stories of the ongoing challenges of navigating mental and behavioral healthcare. Solutions proposed centered around holistic and person-centered care, as well as healthcare system changes. The group also proposed more access to resources, community inclusion, and care support and education. Community providers also shared through email that recruitment of social worker and mental health staff is a challenge.

The group talked about fragmentation and “silos” in behavioral healthcare. In response to these problems, they suggested that multi-agency information sharing releases could be standard and that care providers should increase communication in support of whole-person care. Preventive services, innovative practices such as emPATH (Emergency Psychiatric Assessment, Treatment, and Healing) units, and culturally relevant care were also suggested.

According to Zomi Bloom, Telehealth Program Manager and leader of the new project around mental and behavioral health care navigation, “We have been inspired by stories of resilience and innovative ideas in our listening sessions across Northeastern Minnesota. Together, with community engagement, we are looking forward to implementing change.”


For Itasca County residents who missed the listening session, Wilderness is collecting feedback directly. Please email your thoughts to [info@wildernesshealthmn.org](mailto:info@wildernesshealthmn.org) or call Zomi Bloom at 218-834-7323.

Local Graphic Recorder Nelle Rhicard will compile feedback across the region into pictures that tell the story of community needs and hopes. The listening session was facilitated in partnership with Northspan Group, Inc.

### **Impact of the Listening Sessions on the Future of Care**

Through funding from the Health Resources and Services Administration’s Rural Health Network Development Program, Wilderness Health and rural Northeastern Minnesota communities will identify successes, barriers, and possible solutions. For questions about the regional listening sessions please reach out to Zomi Bloom at 218-834-7323 or [zomi.bloom@wildernesshealthmn.org](mailto:zomi.bloom@wildernesshealthmn.org).

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	<p><i>About Wilderness Health-</i> a non-profit collaborative of independent providers working together to improve rural health care in Northeastern Minnesota and Wisconsin. Headquartered in Two Harbors since 2013, Wilderness Health aims to create a unified and supportive network for its members through its</p>
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core values of collaboration, independence, networking, and quality. For more information about Wilderness, visit <https://wildernesshealthmn.org/>.

**Wilderness Health Members:**

Bigfork Valley Hospital

Community Memorial Hospital

Cook Hospital

Ely-Bloomenson Community Hospital

Fairview Range / Range Regional Health Services

Grand Itasca Clinic & Hospital

Aspirus Lake View

North Shore Health

Aspirus St. Luke's