



Newsletter

Fall 2004

Field Center Mission Statement

Guided by the Schools of Social Work, Law, and Medicine and the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, the Field Center for Children's Policy, Practice and Research brings together the resources of the University of Pennsylvania to enhance and assure the well-being of abused and neglected children and those at risk of maltreatment. By moving beyond traditional approaches, the Field Center utilizes an interdisciplinary model to integrate clinical care, research and education, inform local and national policy, and prepare the nation's future leaders, for the benefit of children and their families.

Field Center Faculty, Staff & Students

Executive Director

Debra Schilling Wolfe, MEd

Co-Directors

Cindy W. Christian, MD
Children's Hospital of Philadelphia

Richard J. Gelles, PhD
Dean, School of Social Work

Alan M. Lerner, Esq.
School of Law

Carol Wilson Spigner, DSW
School of Social Work

Students

Emily Brueckner
Penn Social Work, MSW Candidate

Katie Calabrese
Penn Law, JD Candidate

Rachel Kahn
Penn Social Work, MSW Candidate

Robin Mekonnen
Penn Social Work, PhD Candidate

Morgan Model
Drexel Public Health, MPH Candidate

Lara Veblen
Penn Law, JD Candidate

Project Manager

Caroline Wong, MSW, LSW

Business Administrator

Kimberly Rothman

Webmaster

Lizza Robb

Legislative Update

In July Representative Wally Herger of California introduced the Child Safety, Adoption and Family Enhancement Act (Child SAFE), H. R. 4856. The proposed legislation would restructure the current federal child welfare program by extending eligibility for IV-E maintenance payments and creating a new block grant for services. Federal participation in payment of foster care maintenance and adoption subsidy will be extended to all children in foster care as well as tribal children. Payments would be capped with a contingency fund for foster care crises.

A new Safe Child, Strong Family Block Grant is proposed which would combine the funds from Title IV-E administration and training and Title IV-B, to create a flexible pool of funds for service and related activities. The proposal is in response to the challenges facing agencies today as reflected in the inability of all states to pass the Child and Family Service Reviews and states' desire to make investments in services to prevent placement and support adoptions. Although the report of the Pew Commission on Children in Foster Care influenced this proposal there are differences between their recommendations and this bill.

We are pleased to announce that the Field Center has moved into our permanent home in newly renovated offices located at 3815 Walnut Street. Our new home, co-located with other research centers affiliated with Penn's School of Social Work, offers spacious offices and conference rooms, a convenient location, and a state-of-the-art clinic facility.



PROJECT UPDATES

DHS Front End Reform Project

The Field Center received a contract from the Department of Human Services (DHS) to develop a procedures manual for front-end workers. The new manual will provide step by step instructions for workers handling reports of child abuse and substantiated abuse cases. Under the direction of Project Manager Caroline Wong, the Field Center is currently discussing formatting and content details with DHS. The project team expects to complete a draft of the manual and begin focus groups with DHS staff in the next two months.

Family Court Judicial Training

On Friday October 30, 2004, the Field Center hosted a judicial training at the University of Pennsylvania School of Law. At the request of Judge Myrna Field of the Philadelphia Family Court, the Field Center organized an all-day training for 13 Family Court Judges. Presenters Judge Lederman, Dr. Osofsky, and Vicky Youcha spoke to the audience about early childhood development, the

relationship between dependency and delinquency, infant and childhood healthcare, and the role of the courts in protecting children within the system. Also in attendance were three DHS workers, over 25 students from the Schools of Law, Medicine, and Social Work, and Field Center staff and Co-Directors. The Field Center thanks Morgan Model (MPH Student Intern) for all of the work she did to make this training a huge success.

Redesign of the Family Court Waiting Room

The Field Center has partnered with PennDesign, Department of Architecture, to evaluate the current Family Court Waiting Room. Through interviews with attorneys, advocates, court personnel, families, and others at the Family Court Building, the Field Center will assess the needs of families utilizing the waiting area. The goal of this project is to create a waiting room that better meets the needs of its users. Currently, the project is awaiting approval by the Internal Review Board (IRB), but the Field Center expects to commence interviews in the near future.

Common Myths about Child Abuse and Neglect

Myths and facts provided by Dr. Richard Gelles, Field Center Co-Director

Myth #1: *Child abuse and neglect is an epidemic with 3,000,000 cases a year*

Fact: There are 3 million reports of child abuse and neglect each year. Only 1 million of these are substantiated cases.

Myth #2: *Child abuse and neglect is a "growing" problem*

Fact: The number of reports, substantiations, and homicides relating to abuse and neglect has not changed since 1992.

Myth #3: *Child welfare agencies remove too many children from their homes*

Fact: From the 3 million reports of child abuse and neglect received each year there are 2.6 million investigations, 1 million of which lead to substantiations. But only 200,000 children are removed from their homes. This means that of reported cases of abuse and neglect, only 6% of children are removed. Of investigated cases, only 7.6% of children are

removed, and of substantiated cases, only 20% of children are removed. Additionally, the number and rate of removals have been constant for a decade.

Myth #4: *The foster care system is bursting at the seams because so many children are being removed from their homes*

Fact: The growth of the foster care population is fueled by too few children exiting foster care, not because too many children are entering foster care.

Myth #5: *Children are more likely to be killed or injured in foster homes than in their own homes*

Fact: Comparing the injury and death rate of children in foster care to the injury and death rate of children reunified with their caregivers shows that the rate is lower among those in foster care than among abused or neglected children who have been reunified with their families.

Myth #6: *Intensive family preservation services reduce placements, reduce costs, and keep children safe*

Fact: There are no scientifically valid studies that support any of these claims. Nearly all of these published claims have appeared in reports issued by the foundations that funded the programs; none have been made in appropriately peer-reviewed, professional journals.

Myth #7: *The crises afflicting child welfare agencies can be solved with more money, more staff, fewer caseloads, and more training*

Fact: Annual child welfare systems expenditures exceed \$20 billion. No increase in staffing or decrease in caseloads has produced measurable improvements. Child welfare systems use the least experienced, most poorly paid workforce, armed with the lowest level of technology. Little effort has been expended to find the center of gravity of the system to intervene at that level.

Strategic Planning

The staff, students and Co-Directors of the Field Center for Children's Policy, Practice and Research have been actively involved in a Strategic Planning process, culminating in a two-day Strategic Planning session facilitated by Lonnie Weiss of Lonnie Weiss Consulting. After surveying selected stakeholders in the community, the Co-Directors and Executive Director met to begin to develop a strategic direction for the Field Center. Bolstered by a dynamic session which included current and past students from multiple disciplines, Field Center staff, and affiliates from Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, a clear and concise blueprint emerged which will forge the future work of the Center.

Highlights of the Strategic Planning process include the following initiatives:

- Participants collaborated on the development of a revised Mission Statement which will serve as the foundation of the future work of the Field Center.
- The group designed a process to be used when considering potential projects for the Field Center. Only those projects which serve to foster the mission of the Field Center will be pursued. If the Field Center has the sufficient infrastructure to accept a project, then project teams will be assembled in accordance with the new project team guidelines.
- Weekly meetings will be redesigned to feature an educational opportunity. Every other month, the full meeting time will be devoted to an educational presentation which will be open to others throughout the University.
- The Field Center will host a two-day conference on child welfare in June of 2005. A roundtable on a significant child welfare issue will take place the following year. This will bring together leading experts from around the country to examine one issue in depth, followed by the production of a written collaborative effort. Funding efforts for the roundtable will begin this year.
- Future partnerships will be pursued in support of one of the following :
 - to generate clinical referrals
 - to increase the Field Center's viability, or
 - partnerships that can enhance policy change.
- The importance of the Advisory Board was confirmed and their role was clarified to one of enhancement of the Field Center's development and promotion of its vision and work.
- New policies and procedures are being developed for the Field Center to support decisions arising from the Strategic Planning process.

Announcing The Field Center's Fall Breakfast Meeting

December 9, 2004
8:30 - 10:30 AM

University of Pennsylvania School of Law
Levy Conference Center
3400 Chestnut Street

*Issues Facing Immigrant
and Refugee Children*

Featuring Gregory Chen, Director of
Policy Analysis & Research
Immigration & Refugee Services of
America, U.S. Committee for Refugees
and a panel of local experts

For additional information or to register:
field_center@ssw.upenn.edu
or 215.573.5442



The Field Center Co-Directors: (left to right) Carol Wilson Spigner, DSW, Richard J. Gelles, PhD, Cindy W. Christian, MD and Alan M. Lerner, JD



Three Envelopes

You have just become the director of a state-run child welfare agency. The outgoing director left you three envelopes and said "each time you have a crisis, open one envelope." The first crisis happens and you open the first envelope: it says "blame your predecessor." About six months later, there is a second crisis and you open the second envelope: "reorganize." Another six months go by, and you face your third crisis. You open the third envelope and read: "prepare three envelopes."

We asked our four co-directors to consider this joke and tell us what action they would take if they were appointed director of a major child welfare agency. The responses outlined below reflect the interdisciplinary perspective of the Field Center.

Carol Wilson Spigner, DSW, School of Social Work

As a general approach, I would want to work on the following things: a timely assessment of the current operations; the development of strategic and operational plans with clear outcomes and time lines; and building internal and external support for the effort.

Assessment

The assessment process would be based on the collection of the best possible data on how the agency is currently performing. Data would be collected on reports of maltreatment, substantiation rates, placement rates, reasons for placement, length of time in care, number and reasons for exits and the outcomes for children and families served. Based on this quantitative understanding, I would talk with staff about the factors that shape those findings in order to identify opportunities for change.

Given that staff is critical to helping children and their families, the assessment would also include an examination of human resource issues including: staffing, caseload sizes, turnover and education levels and training opportunities for staff. The findings of the most recent federal accountability review and program improvement plan would provide information on compliance with federal law and policies.

Because child welfare systems are dependent on others to get their work done, I would spend time assessing the relations with the Courts and mental health and other critical agencies. Often there are communication and operational problems among the critical partners that need to be resolved in order to improve services for children.

Strategic and operational plans

These plans would set the direction for the agency by identifying the focal areas of work and the activities to be undertaken and the criteria for the evaluation progress. The general area of work would include four key areas.

First, assuring the safety of children in custody would be a priority. Every child would be visited to assess the quality of their care and the extent to which the provider meets the licensing requirements. The goals and service plan for each child and their family would be reviewed and affirmed or changed. Second, a critical area of work would be reducing the number of children entering care through prevention and early interventions services. This would require the modifying and/or development of service to serve children in their own homes while assuring safety. Third the agency would focus on reducing the length of time in care by intensifying services, reducing case loads and working with the courts and providers to expedite decision making. The final focus would be on increasing permanency for children intensifying services, reducing case loads and working with the courts and providers to expedite decision making.

Building internal and external support

These goals cannot be accomplished unless the staff including workers and managers and external partners embrace the change agenda and support it through their action. Time will need to be spent engaging staff in the work and helping them to understand the opportunity to not only improve the conditions of the children they serve but also the conditions in which they work. As noted earlier the courts and other agencies are critical to the success of a child welfare agency. Positive goal oriented relations will need to be developed and nurtured. This will require the development of a problem solving structure that benefits all parties.

Reducing child maltreatment also requires partnerships with communities and neighborhood where children are at greatest risk. This will require the agency not only to open itself up to the community but also outreach and engagement.

Cindy W. Christian, MD , School of Medicine

If a state-run child welfare agency was to appoint a pediatrician to run the agency (!), I would work hard to put in place systems that focused on the health of the children in their care. This focus would begin at intake and continue throughout the history of the case. A good friend and colleague recently reminded me that without a proper medical evaluation, diagnoses important to a child's life can be missed, abuse can be missed or overcalled, and serious mental health problems will go unattended. The quality of our child protection work is based on making the correct initial diagnoses- if our diagnoses are wrong, our solutions also will be wrong. We have seen this time and again in cases from New Jersey, Pennsylvania and around the country. Children involved with the child welfare system, and especially those in foster care, have higher rates of medical, dental, mental health and developmental problems than similar children not involved with the system. We know that child maltreatment affects the health of children and the health decisions that adolescents and young adults make, which in turn leads to adult morbidity and early mortality. It is important to address these issues early- when we can hope to make a positive impact on children.

Alan M. Lerner, JD, School of Law

I would like to make the following changes that involve law and the legal system. They are designed to improve performance, communication, and accountability of the Department and its lawyers, with respect to the court, and the other parties (1-5), and improve service and accountability by other parties (6).

1. Increase staff so that the caseload could be reduced to those recommended by the profession, and that would permit the effective implementation of the other changes that I am proposing below.
2. I would create a mandatory continuing education program involving issues of the theory and elements of dependency law and evidence, child health, safety, development and family dynamics applicable to child welfare and dependency hearings. The program would involve both case workers and lawyers who represent the Department in these proceedings. Having them take this training together would create a positive professional relationship between them.
3. I would require that along with every submission from child welfare investigators to the legal department seeking the filing of a petition in Dependency Court, the investigator would have to provide a detailed (as much as possible depending on the urgency of the matter) memorandum explaining the investigation, the information collected, the urgency of the matter, what other information is still being sought, what are the specific positive outcomes that the investigator seeks to achieve, or adverse consequences that the investigator is seeking to prevent, by the court's intervention, what services the investigator thinks are necessary to achieve those goals, and why. Also, what efforts have been made to resolve the matter short of litigation, and what resolutions short of the goal(s) enunciated by the Department, might provide satisfactory steps towards safe and permanent situation for the child(ren).
4. I would require that, except in emergency (e.g. Restraining Order) matters, the investigator and the lawyer handling the case meet at least 36 hours before the case is scheduled in court to discuss the matter in detail.
5. For every aspect of the recommendation in court, and in an FSP, I would require an explanation of how, and in what time frame the person making the recommendation thinks it will contribute to the goal of safe and permanent outcome for the child(ren) within, or close to, the time frames provided by ASFA or other applicable law.
6. Not less than one week before every court hearing or FSP meeting after the first of each, the child welfare agency would be required to provide its counsel, and counsel for all other parties, a detailed memorandum of what was done, by whom, and when, and what was not done, and why, pertaining to every element of service or performance contained in the last court order and/or FSP.
7. I would lobby the legislature to provide both a system, and funds, to assure that counsel for every party in a dependency proceeding has access to experienced social work professionals to assist in representing the lawyer's client.

Richard J. Gelles, PhD, School of Social Work

Envelope #1: Develop a tangible vision for the agency:

We make decisions that affect the safety and well being of children.

Our goal is permanency.

Never remove a child from a home unless you have a permanency plan.

A decision not made is a decision made.

Envelope #2: Use technology to assist your workforce in making decisions. If Ebay can track one million transactions each day, we can know where each child in our care is 24/7.

Envelope #3: It's not money, staff size, or caseload. It's us.



FOCUS ON THE FIELD CENTER

Advisory Board Member Highlight

Marie Field

Mrs. Marie Field first learned about the interdisciplinary work being done at the Center for Children's Policy, Practice and Research at a Board of Overseers meeting in 1999, and compares her instantaneous interest in the Center to "falling in love at first sight." Her efforts on behalf of the Center are motivated by three core beliefs: children deserve to grow up feeling safe and loved; it is intolerable that innocent children suffer and languish each day; all children should be given every opportunity to fulfill their potential. She is convinced that the Center's innovative, multi-disciplinary approach to solving complex, multi-faceted problems will have a positive, far-reaching impact on improving the lives of at risk children.

"Because I was fortunate to grow up in a nurturing environment," she explains, "because I was able to provide the same for my children and now see my grandchildren flourishing within loving homes, I understand from personal experience the importance of fulfilling children's emotional and developmental needs. I learned even more about young people and

their requirements for supportive environments from my years as an elementary and middle school teacher.

Mrs. Field is both proud and shy that her family name is associated with the Center, and very much appreciates "the extraordinary opportunity to be part of this innovative effort to help disadvantaged children. My husband Joe and I are very grateful to all the talented and dedicated professionals and students who work so hard at the Center on behalf of the countless children who desperately need help. We believe they are on the right track and that the Center will become a major force in affecting the changes urgently needed to improve the systems that are currently shortchanging or failing the children they are meant to serve.



The Field Center offers exciting partnering opportunities from fellowship to corporate sponsorship to endowment of space. Thanks to a generous challenge grant from the Joseph and Marie Field Foundation, every unrestricted gift, pledge and grant providing either operating or endowment support for the Field Center may be eligible for matching funds on a one to one basis.

For more details please contact:

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This newsletter was compiled by Emily Brueckner and Rachel Kahn, Social Work Student Interns at the Field Center for Children's Policy, Practice, and Research. We welcome your feedback about the first issue of the Field Center newsletter and invite you to share comments and suggestions by emailing Emily (embrueck@ssw.upenn.edu) or Rachel (rkahn@ssw.upenn.edu).

The Field Center for Children's Policy, Practice and Research extends a special thanks to Lizza Robb for formatting this newsletter.

If you prefer to receive this newsletter via email, please send a request to field_center@ssw.upenn.edu.



Field Center Student Interns: (clockwise from top) Robin Mekonnen, Rachel Kahn, Morgan Model and Emily Brueckner (not pictured: Katie Calabrese and Lara Veblen)

Co-Director Highlight

Professor Alan Lerner, JD

Professor Lerner, the newest Co-Director at the Field Center, represents the University of Pennsylvania School of Law. Professor Lerner joined the Penn Law faculty in 1993 and brings with him expertise in Litigation, Child Dependency Law and Practice, Employment Law, Civil Rights, and Professional Responsibility. In 2002 Professor Lerner began co-teaching the Interdisciplinary Child Advocacy Clinic with Dr. Cindy Christian (current Co-Director at the Field Center), which involves law students, medical students, and social work students, working together to study issues of child maltreatment and providing representation for children in dependency hearings. Professor Lerner started working with the Field Center in Spring of 2002.

Professor Lerner believes that the Field Center has "the potential to initiate and carry out research of an interdisciplinary nature, that will be far more valuable than uni-disciplinary work... No training of professionals as diverse in their basic training or daily work as DHS workers, or judges could possibly be

complete, or effective, if it didn't involve issues of law, social work, and medicine."

The most critical issue within the field of child abuse and neglect from a legal perspective, according to Professor Lerner, is "improving the quality of the lawyering for all participants; providing the quality and quantity of judicial, and legal resources, so that all of the professionals in the system can do their jobs at a high level of professionalism and proficiency; improving and rationalizing the standards and procedures, so that, without being overly invasive of families, we can improve our record of early identification and appropriate intervention in situations in which children are at risk."



Student Intern Highlight

Morgan Model



Morgan Model began interning at the Field Center in the spring of 2004. As a student in the Master's of Public Health Program at Drexel University, Ms. Model needed to find an agency where she could complete the field practice component of her program. After reading an article by Dr. Cindy

Christian about Safe Place and following up with Debby Wolfe, Ms. Model sought out the Field Center as her placement.

For her first project at the Field Center, Ms. Model researched judicial training programs and presented her findings to Judge Myrna Field in Philadelphia. As

a result of her research, the Field Center partnered with Judge Field to host a day of training on October 29, 2004 for the Philadelphia Family Court judges.

In May, Ms. Model will graduate from Drexel with her MPH and hopes to attend law school in the fall. Her desire to specialize in public interest law stems from the fact that she has "always been the volunteering type and her interests have always been in underprivileged populations." Ms. Model's past and current volunteer experiences include being a counselor at Camp Dream Catcher (for kids affected or effected by HIV), volunteering in an ER trauma center, and participating in bike races for MS, ALS, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, and breast cancer. In the future, she hopes to work with children; she understands that "children don't have anyone to speak for them, and when they're young they can't stand up for themselves." The Field Center is extremely happy that Morgan Model is currently a part of our team.

Fall 2004/Winter 2005 Conference Calendar

Pennsylvania Court Improvement Conference

11/15/2004 - 11/16/2004

Harrisburg, PA

University of Pennsylvania School of Social Work, Class of '54 Lecture

Jason DeParle, New York Times reporter and author

American Dream: Three women, ten kids and a Nation's drive to end welfare

11/22/2004

Philadelphia, PA

Family Safety and Child Abuse Prevention: a Pediatric Healthcare Response to Domestic Violence

Betsy McAlister Groves, MSW, LISCW

12/8/2004

Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, PA

Contact Marcia Francis at 215 590 7230 or

francism@email.chop.edu

19th National Training Institute A changing World for Babies

Zero to Three: National Center for Infants, Toddlers and Families

12/03/2004 - 12/05/2004

Sacramento, CA

<http://www.zerotothree.org>

Field Center Breakfast Meeting

12/9/04 8:30 - 10:30 am

Issues Facing Immigrant and Refugee Children

Philadelphia, PA

field_center@ssw.upenn.edu or 215.573.5442

2004 Child Abuse Conference

Alamo Children's Advocacy Center

12/13/2004 - 12/14/2004

San Antonio, TX

<http://www.acactx.org>

2005 National Girls Initiative/Florence Crittenton Roundtable

01/05/05-01/07/05

Scottsdale, AZ

Email: register@cwla.org

202-942-0308

The Society for Social Work and Research Ninth Annual Conference

The Society for Social Work and Research

01/13/2005 - 01/16/2005

Miami, FL

<http://www.sswr.org/conferences.php>

19TH Annual San Diego Conference on Child and Family Maltreatment

Chadwick Center for Children and Families, Children's

Hospital-San Diego

01/24/2005 - 01/28/2005

San Diego, CA

Website: <http://www.chadwickcenter.org>

8th Annual Women in Leadership Retreat: *Looking in the Mirror: Reflections on Leadership*

01/26/05-01/28/05

Tempe, AZ

Email: ngoldman@cwla.org

617-770-4464

2005 BACW National Conference: *A New Covenant: Reengineering Systems of Care for African American Children*

03/06/05-03/08/05

Arlington, VA

<http://www.blackadministrators.org>



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