

NEWS FROM THE FIELD

Spring 2007



THE FIELD CENTER

for Children's Policy, Practice & Research



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NATIONAL CHILD WELFARE SUMMIT HELD ON INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

The Field Center hosted a day-long Child Welfare Summit on Information Technology at the Penn Club in New York on March 2, 2007. The summit brought together experts from multiple arenas to explore the need for a transparent and effective means of managing information and improve accountability in the child welfare system. Funded by a multi-year grant from the Hite Foundation, the Field Center identified the development of a real-time accessible management information system as a priority in advancing the field of child welfare. To this end, the goal of the summit was to establish the foundation for the eventual development of a casework management information system that can track cases in real time and alert supervisors and agency officials as to gaps or inadequacies in casework services and monitoring and provide workers in the field with critical case information.

Participating in the summit were key leaders and representatives from the public and private sectors from around the country, including New York Commissioner John Mattingly and key New York Administration for Children's Services staff, the Casey Strategic Consulting Group of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, child welfare information technology experts, U.S. House of Representatives staff, business and philanthropy leaders, technology, casework, and supervisory representatives from several child welfare systems, and Field Center child welfare experts. The Field Center presented the results of its national survey on the use of information technology, highlighting the limits, needs and challenges which currently exist. Numerous issues were identified, including the need for user-friendly technology, the lack of a business model inherent in child welfare, limits of cell phone technology, falsification of data, knowledgeable staff and training, and the need for mobile technology.

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**THE FIELD CENTER
FOR CHILDREN'S POLICY,
PRACTICE & RESEARCH**

Founding Benefactors Marie and Joseph Field

Guided by the Schools of Social Policy & Practice, Law, and Medicine and the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, the Field Center for Children's Policy, Practice & 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.

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**documentary
film festival**

**CONGRATULATIONS TO THE DOCUMENTARY
FILM CONTEST WINNERS**

Thank you to all of the students who worked so hard in creating original films on the subject of child abuse. Area high school and college students examined the issue of child abuse from a variety of perspectives. The winners are:

Best Documentary - High School

Abuse

Oxford Area High School

Student filmmakers:

- Adrienne Fisher
- Michael Aurite
- Shanta Hughes

Teacher: Bob Vincent

Best Documentary - College

**Crystal Clear: Breaking the Cycle
of Incest**

Ursinus College

Student Filmmakers:

- Jordan Mitchell
- Eric Sulock
- David Marcheskie
- Carly Haines

Professor:

Lynne Edwards, PhD
Associate Professor and Chair,
Media and Communications Studies

Honorable Mention

Life in the: System

**Independent Living Program
Pennsylvania Child Welfare
Training Program**

Filmmaker: Jared Wiley

Program Staff: Joel Miranda

A special thank you to our panel of expert judges:

- Madeline Bell, Senior Vice President, Children's Hospital of Philadelphia
- Joan Bressler, Director, Greater Philadelphia Filmmakers, Greater Philadelphia Film Office
- Marie Field, Founding Benefactor, Field Center for Children's Policy, Practice & Research
- Judy Gelles, Award-winning documentary filmmaker
- Jared Martin, Co-founder and Creative Director, Big Picture Alliance
- Maida R. Milone, Executive Director, Center for Emerging Visual Artists
- Michael Schulder, Producer, CNN
- Jason Toff, University of Pennsylvania Wharton student and student filmmaker

CHILD ABUSE PEDIATRICS: A NEW SUBSPECIALTY IN PEDIATRIC MEDICINE

Cindy W. Christian, MD, Chair, Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention, The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia

Child maltreatment is a public health problem that has not yet been embraced as such by the American populace. Each year in the US, 3 million children are reported to child welfare as victims of child maltreatment. Among our many responsibilities, physicians are required by society to identify and treat victims of child abuse and neglect. Federal and state laws mandate our reporting of suspected cases for investigation, and our ethical mandate is to use our skills to promote the health, safety and well-being of our patients. Despite the importance and frequency of this problem, many physicians do not have the competencies needed to fulfill these mandates. Many factors contribute to this dilemma—beginning with medical school education and continuing with issues that confront practicing clinicians. Little time is spent in medical school and in pediatric residency training on issues of family violence and child abuse, so that historically, young physicians graduating into practice have few skills and little knowledge about identifying and handling cases of family violence and child abuse.

Improving clinical competency in child protection for all physicians who care for children requires a comprehensive approach. Although some physicians may view child abuse and family violence as a social or legal problem, and not a health issue, there is compelling evidence that family violence and household dysfunction are significant contributors to medical problems that lead to adult morbidity and early mortality.¹ As such, some solutions must be generated by the medical community. The notion that eradicating the leading causes of adult morbidity and mortality is in the public's interest has led to significant investment in research and education related to cancer, heart and lung disease, and stroke.² Changes in physician attitudes, clinical practice and medical education can occur if physicians recognize and embrace family violence as the public health problem it is. Like with other important public health problems, federal research funding can be made available for strategies to prevent and successfully intervene in child abuse and family violence. We have started to see some federal interest in this field, although we have a long way to go. With available funding, medical school administration and faculty will become more engaged in the field, and will help to drive the medical educational curriculum. Until these changes occur, it will take the dedication of a small, but select group of physicians to work together to advance the field. Some advances have recently occurred. Within the past decade, physicians from around the country who dedicate much of their work to child protection have organized and formed the Ray E. Helfer Society. Among its many goals, The Helfer Society promotes education and training in the medical aspect of child abuse and neglect, advocates for improved resources for research, clinical practice and education, and emphasizes the importance of the field of child abuse and neglect within medicine. With considerable work on the part of Helfer Society members, this past year the American Board of Pediatrics has received approval to offer a Certificate of Special Qualifications in Child Abuse Pediatrics.³ With this subspecialty designation, residency educational requirements in child abuse will be mandated by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME). Resident education will expand, and graduating physicians will have better competency in issues of child protection. These recent advances represent significant progress for a relatively new, but important field in medicine. They represent opportunity, and hope that further advancements in education and practice will come soon, leading to improved care for vulnerable children.

1. Felitti VJ, Anda RF, Nordenberg D, Williamson DF, Spitz AM, Edwards V, Koss MP, et al. The relationship of adult health status to childhood abuse and household dysfunction. *Amer J Prev Med* 1998;14:245-58.
2. Krugman RD, Cohn F. Time to end health professional neglect of cycle of violence (commentary). *The Lancet* 1002;358:434.
3. Block RW, Palusci VJ. Child abuse pediatrics: A new pediatric subspecialty. *J Pediatr* 2006;48:711-2.

IN MEMORIUM JUDGE MYRNA FIELD

Perhaps the least appreciated component of the child welfare system is the Juvenile or Family Court. Few discussions about the problems and issues that bedevil the American child welfare system focus on the court, its function, and its leadership. And, yet, the Family Court is the final and most important arbiter of what society offers as services for families and protection for abused and neglected children as well as juvenile offenders.



If the court is generally underappreciated, so too are the judges underappreciated. For many judges, juvenile or family court is a form of professional Siberia—a place to serve out a term but not the highpoint of a judiciary career.

Myrna Field (Baum) was a refreshing and passionate exception to the rule. Judge Field served as the Administrative Judge of the Family Court in the First District of Pennsylvania for four years, stepping down in December 2005. I met Judge Field as a result of her meeting Field Center Faculty Director Alan Lerner in Family Court. Judge Field talked to Alan about her hopes and goals for the court and its judges and the next thing I knew I was in her office hearing her spell out her own sense of how the court could be improved. That conversation led to the Field Center sponsoring a half-day training for Family Court judges on child development. In addition, former Faculty Director Annie Steinberg initiated a series of training sessions for judges at the Family Court. At the time Judge Field stepped down from the bench we were discussing a court improvement program that would place social workers in the court to work with families while they awaited hearings (those discussions continue with Judge Dougherty).

Judge Field was known for, and accomplished, much more than her four years on the bench in Family Court, but for us at the Field Center her passion and devotion for children stood out. Judge Field passed away at age 71 on April 24, 2007. She will be missed by family, friends, and colleagues. Her gifts to the dependent children of Philadelphia are part of her impressive legacy.

Richard J. Gelles, Ph.D.
Faculty Director



NATIONAL CHILD WELFARE SUMMIT HELD ON INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

(continued from page one)

Currently, data is collected and maintained in a legacy system (SACWIS) which has limited benefit for casework practice and management. Technology exists which can provide real-time access to case information both in the field and in the office but is not widely in use. Summit participants identified barriers to change which include the need to maintain silos between jurisdictions, the lack of key leadership to initiate large-scale change, the absence of national standards, and that such change is voluntary. A number of critical issues emerged throughout the process. Worker safety, concern about profiling of cases, privacy and confidentiality, “flagging” cases, information-sharing between systems, and closing the data loop so that collected data could inform decision-making were key topics addressed by summit participants.

Next steps to be undertaken to improve child welfare management information systems include identifying:

- Key partners/partnerships to gain support surrounding changes in the system;
- Who is ready for change;
- Software designer/design components;
- Funders willing to support this initiative.

The Field Center will be addressing these areas over the next year.

Photos from top: 1. (l to r) Tom Woods and Kathleen Feely, Casey Strategic Consulting - Annie E. Casey Foundation, Commissioner John Mattingly, NY Administration for Children’s Services **2.** (l to r) Kerry Greene, Human Services Director Joseph Roynan, Dana Meyer, Montgomery County (PA) Children & Youth **3.** (l to r) Daniel Stein, Stewards for Change, Christopher Partridge, Kim Leitl and Ami Orlin, Wisconsin Department of Health and Human Services



BREAKFAST SYMPOSIUM ADDRESSES CHANGING TREATMENT PRACTICES IN CHILD WELFARE

David Kolko, Ph.D. was the featured presenter at the Field Center’s Spring Breakfast Symposium, held on April 11, 2007 at the University of Pennsylvania Law School’s Levy Conference Center. Dr. Kolko’s talk on *Studying and Changing Treatment Practices in Child Welfare: Trials and Tribulations* addressed trauma treatment from a practice and research perspective. He highlighted limited outcome research and dissemination in the field, poor adoption of empirically supported treatments in real-world clinical settings, and a disconnect between current scientific knowledge and practice in the field as challenges to evidence-based practice in the trauma field. Dr. Kolko presented his work in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy to illustrate empirically supported treatment.

Dr. Kolko is Professor of Psychiatry, Psychology and Pediatrics at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine and Director of Science and Practice for Effective Children’s Services at the Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic. He has been involved in child abuse treatment and prevention research for 25 years and is currently the principal investigator of the Partners for Families project, a treatment effectiveness study funded by NIMH, and a treatment development affiliate in the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (SAMHSA).

FIELD CENTER FACULTY DIRECTOR NAMED BELLOW SCHOLAR

The American Association of Law Schools Committee on Lawyering in the Public Interest has named Field Center Faculty Director Alan Lerner as a Bellow Scholar for his work on *Identifying the Red Flags of Child Neglect to Facilitate Evidence-Based Focused Responses*. This award is bestowed on projects that embody the ideals of justice and transformation. Professor Lerner was invited to present this study at the American Association of Law Schools Clinical Workshop held in New Orleans on May 5, 2007.

THE "RISKINESS" OF SEXUAL BEHAVIOR PROBLEM GIRLS

Ann Pimental, MSCJ/MHC, Deborah Cavanaugh, MA and Robert Prentky, Ph.D.
Research Department, Justice Resource Institute, Boston, MA

Treatment and management problems posed by adolescent sexual offenders have been the subject of scholarly attention for some thirty years. Within the past half dozen years or so, the developmental net has widened to include pre-adolescents, often referred to as children with "sexual behavior problems" (SBP). Children as young as 9, in some cases even younger, may be adjudicated delinquent for sexual offenses and become subject to registration and community notification. Federal legislation further mandates that child "sex offenders" may be examined for inclusion on a national sex offender registry with Internet access.

This pandemic of anxious vigilance targeting the full developmental gamut of "SBP children" has led to the socio-legal remedies briefly mentioned above. This concern for the risk of harm posed by these children has also prompted a spate of empirical research on these youngsters. In this article, we briefly describe some of our findings from an ongoing study of 822 SBP youth in the care and custody of the Department of Social Services (DSS) in Massachusetts. One of the unique aspects of this study was the inclusion of a moderately large number of girls (N = 155). It is the subsample of girls that we will focus on here. Girls represented a fifth of our sample, considerably higher than the 5-7% estimated by Matsuda, Rasmussen, & Dibble (1989) to be proportion of juvenile sex offenders who are girls.

Although 19% is a significant proportion of our sample, even this number may be an underestimate of the actual number of SBP girls in the Massachusetts DSS child welfare population that we were drawing from. There appears to be a real gender bias against seeing girls as sexually "deviant" or aggressive. Girls are seen as compassionate, caring, and nurturing. Girls play with dolls and fantasize about romance, babies, and being a mommy. Girls are not typically seen as interpersonally aggressive, coercive or, even worse, *sexually deviant*. Girls are much more likely to be seen as victims than aggressors. In general, girls' capacity for violence and aggression is frequently minimized (Chesney-Lind, & Okamoto, 2001; Schwartz & Cellini, 1995). As Robinson (2006) found, in a school setting, boys are much more likely than girls to be punished for the same sexualized behaviors (grabbing buttocks and genital area of other kids).

In sum, the threshold for identifying SBP in girls may be higher than in boys (more severe behavior) with greater caution or reluctance to label girls as having SBP. When the same sexual behavior is observed in boys and girls of the same age, ascribing "risk" to the girls is less likely to occur. The question of the "riskiness" of young girls is one that we have been looking at for the past few years.

In a study recently completed by Justice Resource Institute's Research Department, we examined a wide range of externalizing behaviors, both sexual and nonsexual, in our sample of child welfare youngsters who had been identified by DSS as posing a risk by virtue of their sexually inappropriate, sexually coercive and/or sexually aggressive behavior and had been flagged for a special evaluation. The evaluation was triggered by a program (Assessment for Safe and Appropriate Placement) established through the Rosenberg law [MA G.L.c.119 § 33B]. The Rosenberg law was designed to improve the management and care of those children who had begun to engage in sexually inappropriate and/or coercive acts with other children. The girls in our sample ranged in age from 4 to 19 at the time of their initial evaluation (average age was 12.24, exactly the same as the boys). Full scale IQ ranged from 50 to 126, with a sample average of 88.

The major reason for the initial referral for an evaluation was described as "fondling" (for 70% of the girls [and 53% of the boys]). "Inappropriate touch" was the second most frequent reason, reported in 26% of both girls and boys. Although "oral copulation" was reported slightly more often among the boys (19%, compared with 14% of the girls), "penetration" was reported more frequently for the girls (16%, compared with 9% for the boys). Based on the referring behavior, one could not conclude that the girls were any more benign than the boys in their SBP.

A large proportion of the girls, close to or exceeding three-quarters of our sample, had a; History of Expressed Anger (86%), History of Conduct Disorder before Age 10 (73%), Juvenile Antisocial Behavior between ages 10 to 17 (73%), and Impulsive Behavior (70%). A very high proportion of the girls engaged in verbal and physical bullying (68%). Notably, there no differences between the girls and the boys in Chronic Lying (69%), Conning & Manipulation (58%), Risk-Taking (33%), Truancy (34%), and Running Away (46%). Girls were less likely to have been arrested prior to age 16 (22%, compared with 38% of the boys), and very few of the girls were adjudicated delinquent (6%). Formal adjudication was very infrequent in this child welfare sample, with 14% of the boys having been adjudicated delinquent.

Differences, or lack thereof, between girls and boys with respect to sexually deviant, coercive, and aggressive behaviors were even more striking. There were no statistically significant differences between girls and boys with respect to: "Pulling Skirts / Pants Down" (25%), issuing "Sexually Explicit Orders / Threats" (27%), "Genital Touching" (80%), "Vaginal Penetration" (17%), "Forced Sexual Acts" (28%), "Foreign Object Penetration" (6%), and "Sexual Contact with Animals" (5%). The girls did not differ from the boys with respect to the number of their victims (average 2.4 with a range of 1 – 10) or the number of separate incidents of sexually inappropriate behavior (average 9.4, with a range of 1-50+).

We observed only a few gender differences with regard to sexually inappropriate or coercive behaviors. Girls were less likely to engage in "Anal Penetration" (5%, compared with 19% of the boys) and less likely to force the victim to perform oral sex on them (7%, compared with 24% of the boys). By contrast, however, girls were as likely as boys to perform oral sex on their victims. Girls were as likely as boys to masturbate their victims (18%) or force their victims to masturbate them (14%). Girls were more likely to target victims that were significantly younger than themselves (4+ years younger at the time of the offense). Perhaps the only noteworthy (and predictable) gender difference was that girls tended to be less physically aggressive in their forced sexual acts.

A clear message gleaned from this study of child welfare SBP youngsters is that girls are quite capable of engaging in a wide range and high frequency of sexually inappropriate and coercive behaviors and that, at least in this study, they looked very similar to their male counterparts.

Dr. Prentky presented on *Juvenile Sexual Offenders: Analysis & Management of Risk* at the Field Center Breakfast Symposium on December 5, 2006.

FOCUS ON THE FIELD CENTER

FIELD CENTER ADVISORY BOARD PROFILE: RENEE DILLON JOHNSON

Renee Dillon Johnson joined the Field Center Advisory Board in 2005, when she moved to the Philadelphia area with her husband and two boys. Renee has an extensive background in public health and the telecommunications industry. For more than ten years, she worked for Children's Hospital in Columbus, Ohio as the Executive Director of the Physician Contract Organization and later as the Vice President of Managed Care. Most recently she was the Executive Director of Prevent Child Abuse Ohio.



Following her move, Ms. Johnson was eager to get involved in a unique and interdisciplinary program. After meeting Field Center Founding Benefactor Marie Field, Ms. Johnson was intrigued by such a "hidden gem." She was excited and motivated to help in any way possible because she believed that "the Field Center is so well poised to make significant changes and improvement."

Throughout the past two years, Ms. Johnson has been invaluable. Using her marketing and public health knowledge, she has helped make the Field Center a more prominent name in the social service community. Ms. Johnson is a hands-on committee member. She helped design and create the new brochure as well as developed new marketing strategies and chairs the Field Center for Children's Policy, Practice & Research Advisory Board's Marketing Committee.

Ms. Johnson has found working for the Field Center to be a fulfilling and rewarding experience. Being an Advisory Board member has allowed her to make a difference by combine her professional and personal experiences. The Field Center thanks Ms. Johnson for her hard work and devotion.

FIELD CENTER STUDENT PROFILE: MICHELLE BENSIGNOR

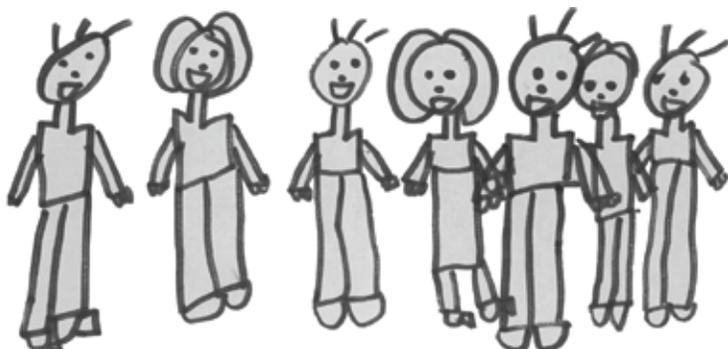
Michelle Besignor is finishing up her BA in psychology at the University of Pennsylvania. She came to intern for the Field Center this January as a way to tie together her interests in political science and sociology. Her interest in the center was piqued after tutoring West Philadelphia children through a Penn program. After seeing the effects of abuse and neglect, Michelle wanted to get more involved in policy.



Having grown up outside of Washington, D.C., Michelle has always been exposed to and taken an interest in the political perspective of children's rights. During her summers, she has interned for several prominent female senators. Her work throughout the years include policy research, cataloging legislative items related to child welfare, and working on a bill that provides additional funding to Head Start.

Though she is a Pennsylvania resident at the moment, Michelle hopes to return to her hometown in June. After graduating, Michelle plans to work for Senator Clinton's presidential campaign. There is a glimpse of law school in the future, but she wants to get some work experience under her belt first.

**A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO
THE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL OF
PHILADELPHIA FOR SERVING
AS THE LEAD SPONSOR OF
ONE CHILD, MANY HANDS: A
MULTIDISCIPLINARY CONFERENCE
ON CHILD WELFARE, THE BIENNIAL
CONFERENCE OF THE FIELD
CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S POLICY,
PRACTICE & RESEARCH.**



The Field Center for Children's Policy, Practice and Research would like to thank its donors for their kind support. A self-sustaining entity, the Field Center relies on the generosity of those concerned with the welfare of vulnerable children to enable us to continue our critical work. Thanks to the generosity of a challenge grant from the Joseph and Marie Field Foundation, donations to the Field Center are matched on a dollar-for-dollar basis. Please contact Nadina Deigh at (215) 898-5518 or deighn@sp2.upenn.edu for further information about contributing to the Field Center for Children's Policy, Practice & Research.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

DATE & LOCATION	EVENT & SPONSOR	CONTACT INFORMATION
May 30 – June 1, 2007 Philadelphia, PA	Field Center for Children’s Policy, Practice & Research 2nd Biennial Conference <i>One Child, Many Hands: A Multidisciplinary Conference on Child Welfare</i>	Email: onechild@sp2.upenn.edu Phone: (215) 573-9779 www.sp2.upenn.edu/onechild
June 6-9, 2007 Washington, DC	American Humane 2007 Conference on Family Group Decision Making	Email: candyl@americanhumane.org Phone: (303) 925-9440 www.americanhumane.org/fdgm
July 11-14, 2007 Boston, MA	The American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children APSAC 15th Annual Colloquium	Email: apsac@comcast.net Phone: (877) 402-7722 http://apsac.fmhi.usf.edu
July 18-20, 2007 Washington, DC	National Resource Center for Child Welfare Data and Technology <i>Making IT Work: Linking Data with Practice and Outcomes</i>	www.nrccwdt.org/nrc_conf/pres_2007_outline.html
September 19-21, 2007 New Orleans, Louisiana	The National Children’s Advocacy Center 8th National Conference on Child Sexual Abuse Prevention	www.nationalcac.org
September 24-26, 2007 Baltimore, Maryland	CWLA Mid-Atlantic Region Training Conference Crisis in Child Welfare: Strengthening Public Policy and Practice	www.cwla.org/conferences/2007midatlanticrfp.html
December 10-12, 2007 New Orleans, Louisiana	National Adoption and Foster Care Training Conference Shared Beliefs, Shared Values: Achieving Excellence in Adoption and Foster Care	www.cwla.org/conferences/2007adoptionrfp.htm



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Spring 2007

Newsletter Highlights...

- Field Center Faculty Director Named Bellow Scholar
- National Child Welfare Summit Held on Information Technology
- The “Riskiness” of Sexual Behavior Problem Girls



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