

## High-tech partners aim to coordinate child welfare

By *John Moore*

A partnership of private and public organizations plans to test a Web-based system to better coordinate child welfare services in Montgomery County, Pa.

The county project brings together the University of Pennsylvania's Field Center for Children's Policy, Practice and Research; Stewards of Change; Microsoft; and Motorola.

The initiative, dubbed the Information Portability Project, will link all services within the county's Department of Human Services, according to a joint statement.

The project also calls for handheld devices that will let caseworkers remotely access files and upload photos and video taken during a home visit. The project does not specify how many caseworkers will carry the mobile units.

"We don't have a number at this point, but the effort is aimed at building an efficient, scalable system that will equip all caseworkers with the handhelds," said William O'Leary, director of Microsoft's health and human services division.

Stewards of Change, a company that focuses on public human services agencies, designed the system with technical support from Microsoft and Motorola. Funding for the design portion of the project stems from a \$950,000 consulting contract between the Field Center and Montgomery County, according to the statement. The high-level design will be refined with development slated to start in 2010.