The Field Center for Children’s Policy, Practice and Research at the University of Pennsylvania has signed a $950,000 contract to partner with the Microsoft Corp., the Motorola Corp., Stewards of Change and Montgomery County, Pennsylvania to design an Information Portability Project, an interoperable technology system that allows automatic, real-time information sharing across all different human service agencies.

Jointly funded by Montgomery County and the Department of Public Welfare, this project will provide the model for applying innovative business technology to the field of child welfare. The first of its kind in the country, this web-based system will be piloted in Montgomery County, but leaders in the child welfare arena hope to replicate it elsewhere in other counties across the state, including Philadelphia.

This new handheld technology will allow better service coordination, seamless systems for prevention, treatment and recovery, as well as field mobility solutions that increase worker productivity, enabling remote data entry and information retrieval. Caseworkers in the field will have immediate access to files and the Information Portability Project will allow caseworkers to provide immediate documentation including downloadable photos from a home visit with a child. Additionally, it provides a GPS-like tracking system for accountability purposes as well as for the safety of the child welfare worker.

In 1989 the United Nations textually formed a plan to give children rights, just in the same way that every human has rights. This text is known as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The Convention has 54 articles and was later joined by two Optional Protocols. The CRC was largely created around already established human rights instruments (i.e., the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenants on Human Rights, and the Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child of 1924). The basis for the creation of the Convention dates back to the establishment of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in the late 1940’s. It is there that it is stated “special care and protection” is needed for particularly mothers and children. However, since declarations are not legally binding, a series of covenants or conventions came in the years following the aforementioned Declaration.

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**UN CONVENTION ON RIGHTS OF THE CHILD: THE UNITED STATES’ FAILURE TO RATIFY**

by Katie Wolfe

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The Field Center for Children’s Policy, Practice & Research is pleased to present its third biennial interdisciplinary child welfare conference. The Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia is again serving as Lead Community Sponsor. This year’s program features outstanding keynote addresses from some of child welfare’s most important thought-leaders:

**Bernadine Dohrn, JD**
Director, Children and Family Justice Center
Northwestern University School of Law

**Carol Wilson Spigner, DSW**
Kenneth L. M. Pray Distinguished Professor
Penn School of Social Policy & Practice
“Disproportionality and Disparities in Child Welfare: Facts, History and the Challenge”

**David Gil, DSW**
Professor of Social Policy, Brandeis University
Heller School of Social Policy & Management
“Child Welfare and the Politics of Human Liberation”

Four compelling plenary panels will be convened on critical topics in child welfare:

- **Child Welfare in the New Administration**
- **Risk Assessment Models and Empirical Validity: Making Life and Death Decisions**
- **Making Your Agency Legally Bulletproof**
- **The Use of Psychotropic Medications by Children in Foster Care**

The conference will feature 30 outstanding breakout sessions offered by presenters from around the nation sharing important practice, policy and research initiatives with conference attendees. An optional Mural Arts Tour will be offered to participants as well.

For more information or to inquire about exhibit space, please visit the conference website at www.sp2.upenn.edu/onechild or contact Conference Manager Deena Caswell at onechild@sp2.upenn.edu or 215.573.9779.
FIELD CENTER AWARDED CONTRACT FOR GROUND-BREAKING INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY DESIGN
(continued from page one)

“Nationally, the number of tragedies that could have been prevented, is enormous. If real-time, inter-operable technology were available, children like Danieal Kelly in Philadelphia, Nixmary Brown in New York, and others may not have died,” Debra Schilling Wolfe, the executive director for the Field Center, said. “This new, cutting-edge pilot program will encourage efficiency, immediate access to services, and support for social workers in what they need to do. Most importantly, it saves children’s lives while it saves money.”

The Field Center will provide oversight and subject matter expertise. Additionally the Center will issue a subcontract for the technology development to Stewards of Change, who will work with Microsoft and the Motorola Corporations to provide the technical assistance needed to develop an operational roadmap for Montgomery County. Other participants in the project include personnel from Montgomery County Human Services and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania’s Department of Public Welfare.

The Field Center’s idea for applying business processes to child welfare arose from Faculty Director Richard Gelles’ observation that companies such as Fedex and Ebay had the capability to track packages and bidding in real-time, yet the child welfare system was unable to produce current information that was critical to keeping children safe. The Hite Foundation, in memory of Sybil E. Hite, provided the funding for the initial research on the project to identify the need for this kind of technological improvement in the child welfare arena, as well as for hosting a national child welfare summit on information technology usage in child welfare. Many ideas emerged from the 2007 Child Welfare Summit on Information Technology, including this pilot program.

CHILDREN’S HOSPITAL OF PHILADELPHIA TO OPEN FIRST MEDICAL CLINIC FOR ABUSE VICTIMS IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY

The Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) is slated to open a new medical clinic to evaluate and treat victims of child abuse in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania. Patients will be seen beginning July 1, 2009.

The Field Center for Children’s Policy, Practice & Research completed a comprehensive needs assessment and feasibility study for Mission Kids, Montgomery County’s new Child Advocacy Center, in 2008. Among its findings were that victims of child abuse were frequently transported to Philadelphia for medical examination as such a specialty care clinic was not available in their home community. By utilizing mapping technology through the University of Pennsylvania’s Cartographic Modeling Lab, it was determined that CHOP’s King of Prussia Specialty Care Clinic would be the most centrally located, with easiest accessibility for most county residents.

Faculty Director Dr. Cindy Christian, Chair of Child Abuse Prevention for Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, and her team of child abuse experts will staff and oversee this new clinic. State-of-the-art equipment has been purchased through a generous grant to Mission Kids by the National Children’s Alliance. This partnership between Mission Kids and Children’s Hospital will ensure that victims of physical and sexual abuse in Montgomery County will have local expertise to meet this critical need.

WILLIAM PENN FOUNDATION FUNDS FIELD CENTER STRATEGIC PLANNING

The Field Center is pleased to announce that the William Penn Foundation will be funding a new strategic planning initiative.

In conjunction with its Fifth Anniversary, the Field Center is embarking on a comprehensive strategic planning process. With the support of the William Penn Foundation, the Field Center will be able to engage in a six month effort to address next steps in its growth as a vital organization dedicated to child welfare systemic reform.
Today, the convention is no longer simple words and thoughts; it is in fact implemented by most United Nations member States, or countries, and all but two have ratified or acceded it: Somalia and the United States. The CRC contains essential rights for every child. These essential rights are the right to survival, the right to full development, the right to protection from harmfulness (influence, abuse, and exploitation), and the right to partake in family life as well as cultural and social life. In addition, there are four core principles of the convention which allow for each and every child to have equal opportunity in every aspect: non-discrimination, dedication to the child’s best interest, the right to life as well as survival and development, and respect for the child’s views. Since children are considered to be a vulnerable group, they need rights in addition to special care and protection; this Convention allows for that.

The CRC consists of all components of international human rights, including civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights, not to mention aspects of humanitarian law. The text of the Convention states not only all of the rights of a child, but the last eleven articles explain the technicalities of how governments, international organizations, and the UN committee will act as personal children advocate lawyers in ensuring that their rights are protected. The two Optional Protocols were adopted in order to help further protection of children in the areas of armed conflicts and sexual exploitation.

Any State who already ratified the CRC is not required to automatically ratify or accede the Optional Protocols, and likewise any State who has not ratified or acceded the CRC is not required to ratify or accede the Optional Protocols. However, if a State, such as the United States has not ratified or acceded the CRC but did sign the Convention, they are able to ratify or accede either or both Protocols. If the U.S. had not signed the convention, then they would not have eligibility to ratify or accede the Protocols. If a State simply signs either the Convention or one or two of the Optional Protocols, then they are stating that they merely agree with the text but they are not legally binding themselves to what the CRC or the Protocols call for and consequently do not have to make physical, documental, or legal changes to their current system in order to be in line with what the text says.

In accordance with article 49 of the CRC, the Convention was put into effect thirty days after the twentieth State ratified or acceded, which occurred on September 2, 1990. For every State that ratified or acceded after that time, the text of the Convention was in effect thirty days past that date. The UN committee that is solely dedicated to working with the States utilizing the CRC affects how exactly each State implements the convention. Each State that has ratified or acceded the CRC has to turn in reports to this committee once within the first two years and one every five years thereafter. These reports help the committee and the State examine what is being done, what needs to be done, what needs to change, and so on. The committee reviews the reports and makes suggestions on what steps need to be taken next. This is a significant feature of how the Convention is implemented. If a State is having difficulty in one aspect or another of the CRC, the committee will go over how they can overcome that obstacle and what appropriate measures need to be taken that will be beneficial to the State’s specific situation.

Unfortunately, not every State, or country, has elected to ratify the CRC. Both Somalia and the United States have not ratified the Convention, the only two United Nations member States that have not done so. At first glance, it would be expected that a leading nation such as the United States would be one of the first, if not the first on board with the Convention. While during the development stages of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the U.S. played a large role in the creation of the document, they did, however, fail to follow through with actually ratifying it when the time came. Through two U.S. presidential administrations, the UN and the CRC committee have been unable to convince or persuade the U.S. government to ratify the Convention. Not only would the United States benefit from ratification, but they would be able to help the other States as well. In Article 23, paragraph 4 of the Convention, for example, it is stated that the State Parties help each other with resources and various capabilities such as information and skills to ensure that each and every disabled child living in each and every State have the best care possible. Benefits for children under the Convention are numerous, including healthcare for all children, children being taught peace and tolerance, opportunities for education beyond primary and secondary schooling, protection from harmful information and material from the mass media, protection from being sentenced to life without parole if they do disobey the laws, and strengthening the child welfare.

The reasons that the United States only signed the document while failing to ratify are far ranging and numerous. Among those reasons are the issues of parental authority, state versus federal rights, family’s privacy and personal choices, and prescriptive criminal punishment. The Convention states in several articles that the child should be able to formulate their own views and opinions. This can be beneficial to children because they will be able to be more independent in the decisions that they make. However, the United States sees this differently, as taking a parent’s authority away. Despite all of the work that would need to be done if the Convention was ratified, there are ways that the United States government can apply the CRC with already established laws. Over time, with help from the Committee, the U.S. could learn how existing laws would need to be amended to satisfy the Convention.

The United States is viewed as a leading nation in the international community. For this reason, in addition to others, the United States serves as a model to many other States. However, this does not mean that the United States needs to look away from what other States are doing right. The United Nations created this Convention for the best interest of the subjects involved: the children. By not ratifying the Convention, the United States may be preventing its children from what is in their best interest. The CRC was created in part because children are considered vulnerable and adoption of the Convention would provide them with needed protection and services, such as healthcare. Currently, the United States does not provide nationalized healthcare and therefore are not in compliance with this requirement of the Convention. Despite the United States’ adoption of the spirit of the Convention, through signing, it has failed to adhere to the letter of the Convention through ratification.
The Field Center wishes to honor the memory of Sybil E. Hite, social worker and philanthropist, who passed away on December 27, 2008 following a year-long battle against leukemia. Born in London, Ms. Hite was a graduate of the University of Sussex. She immigrated to New York in the late 1960s, worked ten years as a social worker in the foster care system, and earned her MSW from Hunter College School of Social Work.

Philanthropist and champion for reform of failing child welfare systems, Sybil Hite believed that every child should have a safe, loving and permanent family. She improved the lives of thousands of vulnerable children and families through her funding of organizations like Children’s Rights to help support a class action lawsuit against the State of New Jersey which forced significant improvements in its child welfare system, Child Welfare League of America for a special journal issue focusing attention on the disproportionate numbers of children of color in the child welfare system, and the Correctional Association of New York for the Women in Prison Project. She shared her life-long love of 19th century British photography with the general public through the funding of exhibitions at the International Center on Photography, the National Gallery of Art, Tate Britain, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. She was a member of the Visiting Committee of the Department of Photography at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and served on the Board of Directors of the New York Regional Association of Grantmakers.

Through the Hite Foundation, Sybil Hite funded the Field Center’s efforts to bring reform to the child welfare system through the use of new applications of information technology that would allow caseworkers and supervisors real-time access to critical information to inform decision-making. She attended and participated in the Field Center’s 2007 Child Welfare Summit held in New York and continued to support this groundbreaking work. Ms. Hite leaves an enduring legacy through her vast contributions to the field of child welfare.

Imagine a world in which...

Children are nurtured in homes with loving caregivers

Professionals from all facets of a child’s life work together to assure the child’s well-being

Those charged with helping and protecting children have the skills, support, and resources to safeguard young lives

Children are truly protected from abuse and neglect

THE FIELD CENTER dreams BIG!

Please join us June 3–5 for our biennial conference

ONE CHILD, MANY HANDS: A Multidisciplinary Conference on Child Welfare

www.sp2.upenn.edu/onechild
Larry Ceisler joined the Field Center Advisory Board in 2007. His public relations expertise and non-profit knowledge made him a great fit for the board.

Mr. Ceisler has over 20 years of experience executing strategic public affairs and grassroots and issue management programs on behalf of corporate and nonprofit clients as well as political coalitions. As a principal in Ceisler Jubelirer, he works with clients such as the Philadelphia Housing Authority, the Pew Environmental Group, Comcast Corporation, Independence Blue Cross, and the National Electrical Contractors Association, among others. His firm has offices in Philadelphia, Harrisburg, and Pittsburgh.

From 1999 - 2003, Mr. Ceisler served as political analyst for FOX Philadelphia. In addition, Mr. Ceisler appears regularly as a political commentator on CBS 3 and CN8 and serves as a political analyst for the Michael Smerconish show on talk radio WPHT-AM 1210. He is frequently quoted on political issues in publications throughout Pennsylvania and the U.S. In addition to serving on the Field Center Advisory Board, Mr. Ceisler also serves as an Advisory Board Member of MANNA. Recently, he was named Chair of Delaware Valley Earth Force, a non-profit organization that engages young people to improve the environment and their own communities through school-based educational projects.

Mr. Ceisler began his professional communications career as a television news producer for KDKA-TV in Pittsburgh. In 1983, he was transferred to KYW-TV in Philadelphia where he worked until 1985. In 1986, he was recruited to join the re-election campaign of Mayor W. Wilson Goode as Deputy Campaign Manager. After the completion of a successful campaign, he served the Administration as Special Assistant for Governmental Relations and later joined the Commerce Department as Special Counsel.

Mr. Ceisler is originally from Washington, Pennsylvania and is a graduate of American University and Duquesne University School of Law. He also attended the University of Pennsylvania Law School. Mr. Ceisler has been a valued member of the Field Center Advisory Board and has been instrumental in the Center’s growth.

Originally from New York City, undergraduate student Jennifer Levy is a junior at the University of Pennsylvania, with a major in Sociology and a minor in Education. She came to the Field Center after discussing ways to become more involved in Penn’s School of Social Policy & Practice, sociology, and work on campus with her advisor, Dean Gelles. Jenny has been a student of the Field Center since her sophomore year. In her free time, Jenny volunteers with the Ronald McDonald House and Big Brothers/Big Sisters, and is a member of the Kappa Alpha Theta sorority. After graduation, Jenny hopes to pursue her interest in teaching with the New York City Teaching Fellows programs. She is also interested in returning to Penn and pursuing an MSW through Penn’s School of Social Policy & Practice.

The Field Center held its Winter Community Symposium on March 3, 2009. Amy Herman, Director of Education Development at Thirteen/WNET in New York, presented a well-received program on The Art of Perception: Rethinking What We See. Utilizing art and photography, Ms. Herman engaged a roomful of professionals in an interactive process to challenge and enhance their observation skills.

Based on a successful collaboration between the Yale Center for British Art and Yale Medical School, Amy Herman developed The Art of Perception with the mission of making medical students better observers of their patients by teaching them how to look at art. Underlying her program was the rationale that a vital part of physicians’ diagnostic skill depends on an ability to observe and describe visual information and yet these skills are rarely taught. The Art of Perception has expanded to seven medical institutions, and Ms. Herman has adapted the program to train law enforcement professionals to help them not only solve crimes but also enhance their perception and communication skills. She has conducted professional training sessions for the New York City Police Department, the FBI, the Secret Service, the Department of Homeland Security, and the Department of Justice, and for school nurses, guidance counselors, drug counselors, and social workers to enhance their observation skills when working with families and children.

The Community Symposium were universally enthusiastic about the session. Attendees described it as a “wonderful presentation and great style of presenting,” “interesting and relevant topic,” and “interestingly presented with real attention to making points about application.” The Field Center was pleased to offer this critical session that clearly met the needs of the professional community. As one participant stated, “I think my staff and I will be able to become stronger clinicians because of it.”
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<td>April 19–22, 2009</td>
<td>National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA)</td>
<td>Phone: (503) 222-4044</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reno, NV</td>
<td>27th Annual “Protecting Our Children”</td>
<td>Email: <a href="mailto:isla@nicwa.org">isla@nicwa.org</a></td>
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<td>Child Abuse and Neglect</td>
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<td>May 3–9, 2009</td>
<td>National Foster Parent Association</td>
<td>Phone: (800) 557-5238</td>
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<td>Reno, NV</td>
<td>National Foster Parent Association 39th Annual Education Conference</td>
<td>Email: <a href="mailto:info@NFPAnline.org">info@NFPAnline.org</a></td>
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<td>June 3–5, 2009</td>
<td>Field Center for Children’s Policy, Practice &amp; Research at the University of</td>
<td>Phone: (215) 573-9779</td>
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<td>Philadelphia, PA</td>
<td>Pennsylvania *One Child, Many Hands: A Multidisciplinary Conference on Child</td>
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<td>Atlanta, GA</td>
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<td>Atlanta, GA</td>
<td>23rd Annual Conference on Treatment</td>
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**HELP US CONTINUE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE!**

Your tax-deductible donation to the Field Center for Children’s Policy, Practice & Research enables us to continue our critical work. As a self-supporting center, the Field Center relies on the generosity of committed individuals and groups to continue to make a difference in the lives of abused and neglected children. Thanks to a challenge grant from the Joseph and Marie Field Foundation, gifts are matched on a dollar-for-dollar basis.

An envelope is attached for your convenience, or you may give a gift online by visiting the Field Center’s website at www.fieldcenteratpenn.org. For more information, please contact Director of Development Nadina Deigh at (215) 898-5518 or deighn@sp2.upenn.edu.
Field Center Awarded Contract for Groundbreaking Information Technology Design

UN Convention on Rights of the Child: The United States' Failure to Ratify

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Newsletter Highlights...

April 2009

NEWS FROM THE FIELD

for Children's Policy, Practice & Research

THE FIELD CENTER

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3815 Walnut Street
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