NEWS FROM THE FIELD
June 2010

University of Pennsylvania
3815 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104
Phone: (215) 573-9779   Email: fieldctr@sp2.upenn.edu
Website: www.fieldcenteratpenn.org

PENN SCHOOL OF SOCIAL POLICY & PRACTICE AND DHS CREATE JOINT SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

The University of Pennsylvania School of Social Policy & Practice has teamed with the City of Philadelphia’s Department of Human Services to create the Penn/DHS Scholarship, a joint program designed to encourage full-time DHS staff to become part-time students pursuing master’s of social work degrees at Penn.

“At the School of Social Policy & Practice, we have the ability to enhance the quality of the skill sets of the workforce,” Richard Gelles, dean of the School, said. “We share the same goal — a stronger, more effective DHS — and this is Penn’s way of making a long-lasting impact for the children of Philadelphia, as well as raising the bar for social work as a profession.”

During the program, the School will contribute $30,000 per student, while DHS will contribute $24,000 per student, for up to five students per year. Each student will be responsible for any remaining tuition and fees.

“The City of Philadelphia and University of Pennsylvania’s new scholarship program will empower DHS employees to apply newly developed and practical job skills to their work in the field,” Mayor Michael Nutter said. “Providing higher education opportunities will not only broaden their professional expertise, but it will also instill a greater sense of pride as they continue to improve the quality of life for those in Philadelphia’s communities.”

In order to receive the merit-based scholarship, DHS employees must be accepted into the M.S.W. program and commit to two years of service with the agency after graduation.

“This is truly a great partnership that will strengthen DHS as an agency so that we can best carry out our mission,” Anne Marie Ambrose, DHS commissioner, said. “Our employees are being offered an opportunity of a lifetime to receive a degree from one of the most prestigious universities in the country. This partnership shows we are serious about having the best and the brightest working at DHS.”

PICTURE: (L to R) Mike Larson, Motorola; Joe Roynan, Montgomery County, PA; Richard Gelles, Field Center; Bill O’Leary, Microsoft; Debra Schilling Wolfe, Field Center; Daniel Stein, Stewards of Change

USING TECHNOLOGY TO IMPROVE CHILD WELFARE OUTCOMES: PILOT PROJECT COMPLETED
by Debra Schilling Wolfe, MEd

The Field Center recently completed its pilot Information Portability Project in Montgomery County, PA. The first of its kind in the nation, this project sought to develop a plan for a comprehensive information technology system that uniquely combined interoperability (sharing of information across child and family-serving systems of care), real-time access, and mobile technology as a means of improving decision-making and outcomes in child welfare.

HISTORY OF PROJECT

The University of Pennsylvania’s Field Center for Children’s Policy, Practice & Research, prompted by concern that children who were known to the child welfare system were tragically dying due to abuse and neglect, and that business routinely utilized technology to track information and inventory yet such applications were not in use in child welfare, sought to explore innovative ways to change practice. Funded through a grant from the Hite Foundation, in memory of Sybil Hite, the Field Center initiated a multiple-year effort to explore such systemic reform.

The Field Center conducted research on the use of technology in child welfare systems across the country, explored the limitations of the federal SACWIS data system, and identified promising technology for use in child welfare. In 2007, the Field Center convened a national Child Welfare Summit on Information Technology in New York. Montgomery County, Pennsylvania was one of several child welfare jurisdictions invited to participate, along with the City of New York and the states of Wisconsin and New Jersey. The summit brought together experts from multiple

continued on page two
Using Technology To Improve Child Welfare Outcomes

continued from page one

arenas, including technology, business, philanthropy, state and federal government, and academia, to explore the need for a transparent and effective means of managing information and improving accountability in the child welfare system. What resulted was a commitment to explore the development of a system that could track cases in real time and alert supervisors and administrators of gaps or inadequacies in casework services, while providing caseworkers in the field with critical case information to improve decision-making.

The Field Center joined with business experts and summit participants Stewards of Change and selected Montgomery County to develop the Information Portability Project, an interoperable technology system that allows real-time information sharing across different human service agencies, both in the office and in the field. With a goal of replication throughout Pennsylvania and across the country, Montgomery County was chosen as the ideal site for a pilot, based on its organizational structure, scale, demographic diversity, and enthusiasm for the project. The partnership was supplemented by the technical expertise of Microsoft and Motorola. The Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare and the Montgomery County Human Services Administration, including the Montgomery County Office of Children and Youth and the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, rounded out the team.

THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY PROCESS

With the award of a $950,000 contract jointly funded by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare and Montgomery County Human Services Administration, the Field Center served as the lead for the team comprised of experts in applying technology and business practices to human services. The business and technology assessments were conducted by Stewards of Change, along with technology partners Microsoft and Motorola. Field Center legal experts, under the direction of Faculty Director and Penn Law Professor Alan Lerner, provided comprehensive research on state and federal statutes and regulations and their impact on sharing of information and confidentiality.

Utilizing the Stewards of Change well-researched “InterOptimability” model, which includes business process mapping, organizational assessments and technology analyses, the partners produced a future vision and operational roadmap to support building a fully interoperable health and human services framework. The project created a plan for eventual interoperable, real-time technology systems that will link together all services within the County’s Human Services Administration as well as State systems as appropriate. Additionally, it offers mobile solutions to enable caseworkers and supervisors immediate access to critical information in and from the field. The mobility component outfits caseworkers with handheld units having real-time, cross-system information in real time, document and track visitation and worker location via GPS, take and immediately upload photos and videos, offer immediate 911 access, and complete required

Implementation of technology in child welfare that shares information across systems, makes information available in real-time, and utilizes tools such as GPS tracking and date/time-stamped photography, can have profound effects on all levels of the system – protecting children, staff, and taxpayers alike. Here are but a few examples of how such a system could have made a difference.

Philadelphia’s Danieal Kelly, a 14-year old child with cerebral palsy, died in her mother’s home from profound neglect, wasting away to only 42 pounds. Nine different people were criminally charged with contributing to her death, including staff of the Philadelphia Department of Human Services and the private agency that was supposed to be providing in-home services and monitoring Danieal’s safety. Required visits to see Danieal were not carried out by either DHS or the private agency. No one above the level of caseworker knew that Danieal had not been seen until it was too late.

Four brothers adopted by New Jersey’s Jackson family subsisted on a diet of pancake batter and whatever scraps they could find. Their plight was discovered when neighbors called the police reporting that an 8-year old boy was eating out of the trash. In actuality, he was 19, with growth profoundly stunted due to neglect. If someone had visited them and uploaded monthly photos, perhaps the brothers’ suffering would have been reduced, if not prevented.

When caseworker Brenda Lee Yeager made a home visit to a family in West Virginia, she was hit on the head with a frying pan, held at knife-point, sexually assaulted, and then suffocated. Safety of caseworkers can be greatly increased if they have access to better information about the families and homes that they go into, and if their supervisors can track where caseworkers are and how long they are there.

“Jessie” was placed with a half-sibling and the sibling’s father (unrelated to Jessie). The father, an agency-approved caretaker despite a history of violence and HIV positive status, subsequently sexually abused Jessie, resulting in the child contracting HIV herself. In addition to neglecting to perform background checks, the caseworker had not visited Jessie in place- ment for three months. The County settled a civil suit for $3.5 million.

continued on page three
forms at the client’s location. This work also provides the state with models and learning that can be transferred to other counties across the Commonwealth, and with a model for replication elsewhere. As a result, a new standard of practice is established.

After spending the past year analyzing existing business process, utilization of and need for technology, and systemic readiness for change, developing a vision map for the county, conducting legal research pertaining to confidentiality of information, and holding a variety of focus groups and interviews with all levels of staff and key stakeholders, final reports were presented detailing both findings and recommendations for implementation. The team met with Montgomery County leadership and followed up with a formal presentation at the Department of Public Welfare in Harrisburg, who deemed the process and results exciting and in line with the future direction of the Commonwealth.

PROJECT IMPACT

Children and families do not live in the silos created by systems and funding streams. By providing information sharing across systems, in the field and in real time, the Information Portability Project revolutionizes service delivery to children and families and makes a difference in significant ways, including:

- Increasing client safety and well-being
- Improving outcomes
- Coordinating service delivery
- Increasing efficiency
- Promoting data-informed decision making
- Fostering safety of the worker in the field
- Providing new tools for supervision and caseload management
- Documenting provision of service
- Supporting workforce recruitment and retention
- Reducing duplication of services
- Meeting increased needs in a time of diminished funding
- Protecting the county and its residents through reducing liability and financial risk

WHY THIS APPROACH IS UNIQUE

The Information Portability Project applies successful business and technology practice to the child welfare field. Though technology-driven, this initiative is focused on information and decision-making. The Information Portability Project is generations ahead of other efforts around the country by integrating all three distinct, yet critical, aspects of technology: interoperability, mobility, and real-time access. This approach differs from other attempts to apply technology solutions that have failed by recognizing that culture change must be initiated prior to implementation of new technology; the most innovative technology in the world cannot be effective if the users either don’t embrace its value or choose not to use it. A comprehensive change-readiness assessment was completed with staff at all levels. Additionally, a multiple-day visioning session was held with both internal and external stakeholders, representing over 100 hours of participation. The result was a graphically illustrated visioning map that has served as the framework for the project. By engaging the prospective users of technology in its development, buy-in is achieved at multiple levels.

MOVING FORWARD

With Montgomery County as the starting point, the Information Portability Project promises change in the way that child welfare and other human services are delivered. Traditional silos will give way to cross-system collaboration and service delivery. The Information Portability Project applies business-proven and industry-specific technology to child and family-serving systems of care to meet emerging human, data, and management needs. Casework will focus on coordinated, technology-supported decision-making, reducing paper-driven, burdensome processes that exist today. Supervisors will have state-of-the-art tools and systems to monitor, train, and improve the skills of their staff. Management can support a safer and more productive workforce, and be better stewards of the public trust.

The Information Portability Project’s approach is timely and in line with current federal initiatives. Electronic record keeping and information sharing is at the forefront of healthcare reform, and child welfare clients are overrepresented in the public health care systems. In a time of fiscal austerity, this approach also promotes efficiency and effectiveness, while reducing duplication of effort and services. The Information Portability Project demonstrates that it is critical for technology to be an integral part of child welfare and all human service delivery, with tremendous return on investment.

For further information on this project, please contact the Field Center’s Executive Director, Debra Schilling Wolfe, at dwolfe@sp2.upenn.edu.
THE ABUSE AND NEGLECT OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Frequently discussed in contemporary United States society is the maltreatment of children and youth throughout the nation. Less commonly discussed, however, is the maltreatment of children that have been diagnosed with one or multiple forms of disabilities. The intent of this article is to demonstrate that the maltreatment of children with disabilities is critical topic due to its prevalence, reporting issues, and potential consequences. This article also aims to address what can be done to improve the current situation and prevent others from occurring in the future.

PREVALENCE

In 2008, there were 758,289 substantiated cases of child abuse and neglect in the United States (Children's Bureau, 2009). In regard to children with disabilities, it is critical to mention that researchers have faced challenges in determining definitive numbers due to a multitude of reasons. Therefore, data are often not in accordance with each other, and the potential for underestimation of maltreatment levels should be taken into serious consideration. According to a 2004 report by Charlton, Kliethermes and Taverne, sixty-four percent of children that experienced maltreatment had a disability. More specifically, it has been estimated that approximately 175,000-300,000 U.S. children with disabilities are maltreated each year (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2001). It has also been stated that one in three children with a disability for which they receive special education services are victims of maltreatment, while one in 10 typically developing (TD) children are victims of maltreatment (Davis, 2004).

Studies have also concluded that children with disabilities (CWD) are significantly more likely to face maltreatment than the TD population. Neglect has been concluded to be 1.6 – 3.8 times more likely in the CWD population, while sexual abuse ranges from 1.8-3.1 times more likely, physical abuse 2.1-3.8 times more likely, and emotional maltreatment ranges from 2.8-3.9 times as likely among CWD’s (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2001). Other research has stated that CWD’s were up to 10 times as likely to be victims of sexual abuse as compared to TD children (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2004). Studies have also found that neglect was the most common form of maltreatment for CWD’s, much like the typically developing population of children (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2001). While there have been various conclusions on the relationship between specific disabilities and types of maltreatment, children with behavioral disorders were assessed to be at highest risk for all types of abuse and neglect (Hibbard, Desch, Committee on Child Abuse and Neglect, and Council on Children with Disabilities, 2007; Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2001). Finally, in quoting a study conducted by Sullivan and Knutson, Child Welfare Information Gateway stated that, “Children with disabilities tended to be maltreated multiple times and in multiple ways,” (p.5, 2001).

REPORTING

A pivotal issue regarding the maltreatment of children with disabilities is the reporting rate. This issue is critical and challenging for a multitude of reasons. One of the reasons is that there is not a nationally agreed upon definition for “disabilities” (Hibbard et al., 2007) Moreover, all states do not collect data on the maltreatment of children in the same ways (Hibbard et al., 2007; Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2001). In addition, states have various methods of collecting data on the potential disabilities of children that may not always be the most effective. For example, in 1999 it was reported in the state of Kansas that .7% of children in foster care had disabilities while in North Dakota, it was reported that 46.7% of children in foster care had disabilities (Bruhn, 2003). It is crucial to note, however, that in recent years, there has been a significant amount of progress on the reporting and discussion of children with disabilities. In 2010, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services published its most recent National Incidence Study of Child Abuse and Neglect (NIS-4), which for the first time included the discussion of children with disabilities.

Other equally imperative issues in terms of reporting child maltreatment for children with disabilities involve lack of ability to recognize signs of abuse (Hibbard et al., 2007), minimal training for Child Protective Service (CPS) workers (Manders and Stoneman, 2008), and a system that frequently does not believe children with disabilities (Hershkowitz, Lamb, and Horowitz, 2007). Furthermore, according to Hibbard et al, “Schools, programs and institutions may have a disincentive to recognize or report child maltreatment because of fear of negative publicity or loss of funding or licensure,”(p.7, 2007). Children with disabilities may also not realize that the maltreatment they are receiving is wrong, due to lack of education, predominantly regarding sex, as well as many other reasons, and therefore may not feel the need to report the maltreatment (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2001). They also may be accustomed to being devalued due to societal beliefs on their disability, and therefore find the maltreatment that they are receiving an acceptable behavior (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2001). Children may also hesitate to report any maltreatment they receive due to the fact that they may be close to and/or dependent on their abusers, particularly if the perpetrator is a parent (which is frequently the case) (Hershkowitz et al., 2007).

CONSEQUENCES

As one may anticipate, the consequences of a child with a disability being maltreated can be not only significant, but long lasting as well. One primary consequence is that children can be significantly emotionally traumatized and develop behavioral problems, which may be long-term (Davis, 2004). This can be compounded with the fact that children with disabilities often face greater challenges in receiving help for mental illness due to processing and communication issues (Charlton., 2004). Additionally, they may face serious physical consequences as a result of maltreatment including damage to the central nervous system, injury to internal organs, burns, fractures, and trauma to the head (Davis, 2004). Much research has also discussed the bi-lateral impact of maltreatment, in which children develop disabilities as a result of maltreatment. (Davis, 2004; Hibbard et al., 2007). Once again, this is true not only in the short term after a child is maltreated, but on a permanent, long-term basis as well. The development of disabilities may also lead to further maltreatment of a child, but there is a necessity for further research on this particular topic (Hibbard et al, 2007).

WHAT CAN BE DONE

There are a wide variety of options available to improve upon the situation of children with disabilities facing maltreatment. One would be to provide education on the maltreatment of children with disabilities to professionals who may care for and/or interact with that population. Professionals may include teachers, early childhood educators, law enforcement professionals, child care providers, judges, and CPS workers. Pediatricians and experts in the disability field as well as child welfare fields can be critical tools for providing this education (Hibbard et al., 2007).

Furthermore, an increase in research and prevention programs that provide education on the topic to general society, families, and youth with disabilities would be tremendously beneficial for the prevention of future maltreatment. In relation to families specifically, providing connections among parents can be a beneficial tool. Beyond this, classes for families that have children with disabilities and may be at risk for maltreatment would be useful, particularly if they included a focus on child development, parenting skills, improving access to resources, coping strategies, and reducing isolation. In order to promulgate research and classes, however, an increase in funding would be critical.

For perpetrators that are non-family members, policies and procedures for organizations that provide services to children with disabilities could be improved upon in order to ensure workers are
The Field Center is pleased to welcome Whitman College student, Anastasia Higham, to Philadelphia as its first intern through the Philadelphia Center.

The Philadelphia Center is an organization dedicated to experiential education. Each semester the center brings undergraduate students from across the country to Philadelphia and helps them find independent housing and meaningful internship placements with Philadelphia organizations. Philadelphia Center students are enrolled in seminars designed to enrich their city and internship experiences along with an elective course. Students work with their supervisor and advisor to develop learning objectives that guide them through their semester in Philadelphia. The Philadelphia Center provides a unique learning experience for students to explore possible careers and gain valuable hands-on experience. Students might discover their perfect career choice, or they might discover that this career path isn’t the right thing for them. Either way, they’ll have made a valuable discovery before graduation and before committing to a job or further education in their field.

I first heard about the Philadelphia Center when a representative came to talk in one of my Sociology classes. At the time I was thinking about my study abroad options, but I couldn’t find anything that particularly spoke to me. Many of my peers chose study abroad programs that aligned with their majors: Australia for Biology, Greece for Anthropology, or London for Theatre, but none of the programs partnering with my school had a particularly strong focus on Sociology. I was also struggling with the idea of what I would do after finishing school. As fascinating as I find the theories and concepts of Sociology, I couldn’t envision how they translated to real-life application and career possibilities. My internship with the Field Center gives me an amazing chance to gain insight into the workings of a non-profit, one that is closely allied with academia and that is meeting a real need in providing protection to the children of Philadelphia. The Field Center is a new placement partner for the Philadelphia Center, and one that the Philadelphia Center is very excited about. The Field Center has experience working with students, and is dedicated to training future leaders. This means that a student like me not only works on projects, but also learns about the skills and strategies it takes to run a non-profit, and becomes versed in the issues of child welfare that the Field Center tackles daily.

Anastasia Higham is an undergraduate student intern who spent the spring semester with the Field Center for Children’s Policy, Practice, & Research. Originally from Seattle, she is a junior at Whitman College in Walla Walla, Washington, majoring in Sociology with a minor in Theatre. She came to the Field Center with an interest in research and in seeing child welfare in practice. In her free time, Anastasia enjoys attending theatre, acting, singing, dancing, reading, and spending time with family and friends.

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PENN NURSING BRINGS NEW PERSPECTIVE TO FIELD CENTER

The Field Center is pleased to introduce the newest member of its team, Cindy Connolly, PhD, RN, PNP, Associate Professor at the University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing. Dr. Connolly’s research analyzes the forces that have shaped children’s health care delivery and family policy in the United States. She is particularly interested in the evolution of pediatric medical and nursing practice, the way in which illness has been experienced over time by children and families, and the legacy of past politics in current health and social welfare policies. After finishing her PhD in nursing history from the University of Pennsylvania in 1999, Dr. Connolly undertook post-doctoral training at the Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health’s History of Public Health and Medicine Program. Her time at Columbia was enhanced by a fellowship in the United States Senate with the late Senator Paul Wellstone where she worked extensively on children’s health and social welfare issues, including reauthorization of the Child Abuse and Prevention Treatment Act (CAPTA). After five years at the Yale University School of Nursing, she returned “home” to Penn where she teaches undergraduate pediatric nursing as well as a Benjamin Franklin Honors seminar, “Children’s Health in the United States, 1800-2000.”

Dr. Connolly was drawn to the Field Center’s work because of its interdisciplinary nature and integration of research, advocacy, education, and practice. She hopes to contribute a nursing and historical perspective to Field Center initiatives as well as identify ways for more undergraduate and graduate nursing students to participate in the Field Center’s work.

SAVE THE DATE!

Field Center Fall Community Symposium
“The Effects of Early Childhood Trauma on the Developing Brain”
Dr. Frank Putnam

Frank W. Putnam, MD is a Professor of Pediatrics and Child Psychiatry at Children’s Hospital Medical Center, University of Cincinnati College of Medicine and Director of the Mayerson Center for Safe and Healthy Children, which is dedicated to improving prevention, evaluation and treatment services for traumatized children and their families.

Wednesday, September 29
8:30 - 10:30AM

Registration will open September 1, 2010
For more information, please visit www.fieldcenteratpenn.com
THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS!
The Field Center would like to thank the following individuals, foundations and corporations for their generous support in FY2010.
(gifts received through 6/15/10)

A special thank to Joe and Marie Field for underwriting the production of a video highlighting the work of the Field Center. Filmed and edited by David Lewis Productions, with Executive Producer Michael Schulder, this captivating short film highlights the plight of child abuse and neglect victims within the child welfare system, the urgency of the issue, and the Field Center’s efforts at systemic reform. Thank you to Joe and Marie for their continued generosity and to Michael Schulder and David Lewis for their outstanding work!

Leadership Circle ($10,000 and above)

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Your tax-deductible donation to the Field Center for Children's Policy, Practice & Research enables us to continue our critical work. 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 www.fieldcenteratpenn.org. For more information, please contact Field Center Executive Director Debra Schilling Wolfe at (215) 573-5442 or dwolfe@sp2.upenn.edu.

Enjoy Broadway and support the Field Center at the same time!

Purchase tickets at www.givenik.com/fieldcenter and 5% will be donated directly to the Field Center. Take a moment to check out our Givenik.com page (and bookmark it for future reference!) and find great tickets to all of your favorite shows. Help Broadway benefit child abuse!
qualified and consistently maintain safe boundaries with children (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2001). Overall, while children with disabilities may be at an increased risk for experiencing abuse and neglect due to a multitude of reasons, families, caregivers, and compassionate strangers can provide not only care for those that have been maltreated, but prevention so that it does not happen in the future.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Child abuse and neglect are prominent issues that plague an overwhelming number of children and families in the United States today. For children with disabilities, maltreatment is not only more common, but can be equally, if not more, detrimental to their mental and physical wellbeing. While this subject matter is not frequently discussed, it is clear that it is of critical importance and should be placed in the forefront as a topic of dialogue and concern.


NEWS FROM THE FIELD

June 2010

Newsletter Highlights...

- Using Technology to Improve Child Welfare Outcomes: Pilot Project Completed
- Penn Nursing Brings New Perspective to Field Center
- Enjoy Broadway and Support the Field Center at Givenik.com

THE FIELD CENTER
for Children’s Policy, Practice & Research

University of Pennsylvania
3815 Walnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19104