From the Desk of the Executive Director

As 2018 draws to a close, we have a great deal to be thankful for as we continue our work to improving the lives of victims of child abuse and neglect and those who are involved with the child welfare system.

Among our accomplishments over the past year:

* We collaborated with Child Welfare League of America to introduce the topic of Insular and Isolated Communities, and those who are not known to the child welfare system, through serving as Guest Editors of a first-ever volume of essays and encouraging further work on this under-researched topic.

* The Field Center selected and has begun to provide technical assistance to a third cohort of campus-based support programs for foster youth at Pennsylvania colleges and universities, bringing the number of new programs to a total of 14 across the state.

* Combining the expertise of faculty focusing on foster care and economics, the Field Center initiated research examining microeconomic factors that impact the foster care system, specifically addressing the capacity of the child welfare system to provide foster homes for all children needing placement.

* After three years of Field Center advocacy, minor victims of sex trafficking will no longer be charged with prostitution but instead will be provided with needed services, with the recent passage of Safe Harbor legislation in Pennsylvania.

* We published a comprehensive directory of support services for foster youth on college campuses across Pennsylvania, the first of its kind.

* Field Center experts continue to shared their knowledge, publishing research and presenting their work locally, nationally and internationally.

As we turn the page to 2019, we look forward to furthering systemic change through the efforts of our multidisciplinary team, to benefit the lives of vulnerable children. From all of us at the Field Center, thank you for partnering with us in our work. We wish you all the best for the New Year.

Debra Schilling Wolfe
Executive Director
The Field Center for Children’s Policy, Practice and Research

SAVE THE DATE!

One Child, Many Hands: A Multidisciplinary Conference on Child Welfare
June 5 - 7, 2019

The Field Center has issued a Call for Presentations. Proposed presentations are solicited that advance the field of child welfare from the perspective of a variety of disciplines. Information can be found on the conference website at onechildmanyhands.org and submission materials may be accessed directly by clicking here. Proposals must include a cover sheet, maximum 25-word abstract, three learning objectives, and maximum 500-word description. The deadline for submissions has been extended to January 5, 2018.

The Field Center for Children’s Policy, Practice and Research will hold its biennial One Child, Many Hands: A Multidisciplinary Conference on Child Welfare in Philadelphia, June 5 - 7, 2019 at the beautiful and historic University of Pennsylvania Law School. The multi-day conference will consist of three days of learning, featuring compelling Keynote Speakers, cutting-edge Plenary Panels, a variety of Workshops presented by national and international experts, closing with a Networking Luncheon.

DEADLINE EXTENDED

FIELD CENTER GUEST EDITS NEW ESSAY COLLECTION PUBLISHED BY CWLA ON CHILD MAINTENANCE IN INSULAR AND ISOLATED COMMUNITIES

A newly-released online essay collection, the result of a collaboration between the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) and the Field Center, addresses the need for more substantive research and increased awareness around child maltreatment within underrepresented and isolated populations. The essays selected for publication in Child Maltreatment in Insular & Isolated Communities, now available for download on the CWLA website (here), explore a diverse range of populations that are disproportionately underscored within the child welfare system, and consider new ways to support and engage these communities.

Field Center executive director Debra Schilling Wolfe, faculty director Dr. Antonio Garcia, and Penn School of Social Policy & Practice Dean John Jackson served as Guest Editors of this issue. The essays will serve to inform a forthcoming issue of the peer-reviewed journal, Child Welfare.
ECONOMIC BARRIERS AND FOSTER FAMILY RECRUITMENT

The Chronicle of Social Change convened a panel presentation on November 13, 2018 at the Rayburn House Office Building on “Economic Barriers and Foster Family Recruitment.” With a welcome by Congresswoman Karen Bass, co-chair of the Congressional Caucus on Foster Youth, Chairwoman Daniel Heimpeil discussed their recent national foster home capacity study, comparing the demand for foster care placements with available foster homes across the country.

Economist Dr. Ioana Marinescu presented preliminary findings from a Field Center research study, conducted with co-Principal Investigator and foster care expert Dr. Johanna Greeson, on macroeconomic factors that may impact the systemic ability of states to recruit and retain foster parent workforce. The Field Center will be publishing its research findings in a new White Paper in early 2019. Click here to view the presentation.

SAFE HARBOR FOR MINOR VICTIMS OF SEX TRAFFICKING BECOMES LAW IN PA

Child victims of sex trafficking in Pennsylvania will no longer be charged with prostitution and instead will be provided with needed services, thanks to the recent passage of “Safe Harbor” legislation. The Field Center has long advocated for this bill and was invited to its signing by Governor Tom Wolf in November.

In 2016, the Field Center published a White Paper entitled An Analysis of Safe Harbor Laws for Minor Victims of Commercial Sexual Exploitation: Implications for Pennsylvania and Other States (view here) that was disseminated to legislators and other concerned stakeholders. We offered testimony in support of this bill the following year (read here). Our groundbreaking national research study on Human Trafficking Prevalence and Child Welfare Risk Factors Among Homeless Youth: A Multi-City Study (view report) was published in 2018, further illuminating the scope of the problem.

PREDICTIVE ANALYTICS IN CHILD WELFARE

The Field Center Faculty Directors invited Professor Richard Berk, Professor of Criminology and Statistics at the University of Pennsylvania to speak on the topic of Predictive Analytics.

Dr. Berk is an international expert on evaluation research and statistical analysis. He has worked with the Philadelphia Department of Adult Probation and Parole and applies statistical algorithms to predict risk of repeated crime among the more than 50,000 adults on probation and parole. Dr. Berk’s presentation examined the possible application of Predictive Analytics to child protective services.

To watch a video of the presentation, including Q&A conversation, click here.

LEGAL CHALLENGE TO THE INDIAN CHILD WELFARE ACT OF 1978

During the period between the enactment of Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act in 1974 (Public Law # 93-247) and the year the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act (Public Law # 93-112) became law, a disproportionate number of Native-American children were removed from their parents and placed in the foster care system.

Between 1974 and 1978 in some states, the proportion of the foster care population made up of Native-American children reached as high as 23-35 percent (Myers, 2006). The vast majority of the children were placed outside of their tribe with non-native families in response to a multi-year study of the placement of Indian children (Fanshel, 1972), tribal advocacy groups challenged such practices.

The Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) of 1978 (Public Law #95-608) established standards for child custody proceedings related to foster care, termination of parental rights, and adoption of Indian children. The standards included: tribal court jurisdiction over children who reside on the reservations; the requirement of notification to the tribe of state or local proceedings involving the placement of an Indian child living off of the reservation, along with tribal rights to intervene and request transfer of the proceeding to a tribal court; an increased standard of proof-clear and convincing evidence; and placement preferences for the extended family or tribe (Pecora et al., 2000). (Continue reading here)
The Multidisciplinary Student Training Institute offers opportunities for selected students across multiple disciplines to work alongside leaders in the child welfare field while completing their education. In addition to an annual cohort of macro social work students completing a field placement, the Field Center works with graduate students across campus to create the next generation of leaders. The 2018-19 academic year is in full swing with a law fellow studying child welfare policy and a PhD student advancing the center’s quantitative research.

Anya Perret is a 2019 J.D. Candidate at the University of Pennsylvania Law School and the Field Center’s 2018-19 Law Fellow. With a law degree and a Master of Public Affairs from Harvard University, Anya is a social worker and politician who is an expert on human trafficking. She is the author of the Pennsylvania Safe Harbor Law, which provides legal protections and supports for children of human trafficking and sexual exploitation. For more information click here.

Nneka Ikewu is a PhD candidate in the Human Development and Quantitative Methods division at The Pennsylvania State University. She is a 2019 J.D. Candidate at the University of Pennsylvania Law School and the Field Center's 2018-19 Law Fellow. She is an expert in child welfare policy and a child protective services investigator. She is the author of the Pennsylvania Safe Harbor Law, which provides legal protections and supports for children of human trafficking and sexual exploitation. For more information click here.

The Field Center in the Media:

Foster Care Youths at Risk for Child Sex Trafficking
Social Work Today

Involvement in the child welfare system presumes a history of maltreatment for children and youths. When children can no longer remain safely in their own homes, courts may make the difficult decision to transfer care to the responsible child welfare agency, which then secures an alternative living arrangement for the child or youth. As foster care and care adoption are in the public spotlight, it is important to consider the role that child welfare policies play in the lives of children and youths. The level of inequality in the U.S. is far above that in other rich countries. The poorest 10 percent of the U.S. is far above that in other rich countries.

Want to Help Poor Children? Give Their Caregivers Cash
The Chronicle of Social Change

During the holiday season, we are all reminded to be grateful for all the good things in our lives. It should also be a time to think about how many of our fellow Americans are far less fortunate than we are. The level of inequality in the U.S. is far above that in other rich countries. The poorest 10 percent of the U.S. is far above that in other rich countries.

New Safe Harbor Law to protect human victims of child sexual exploitation
Fox43

Governor Tom Wolf created new protections and supports for children of human trafficking and sexual exploitation by signing Senate Bill 554, now Act 130 of 2018. The new law shields children from prosecution for crimes their abusers forced them to commit, enhances law enforcement efforts, and establishes new state-level rules and protocols for collaboration among law enforcement agencies and other service providers.

For more information, click here.
Americans get a mere 1.6 percent of total cash income, own earnings and government transfers included. In comparison, France and Sweden’s poor receive more than twice as much.

Click the link below to learn more about The Field Center

www.fieldcenteratpenn.org

To receive more information about Field Center work, trainings, and events please click HERE.