The Field Center for Children’s Policy, Practice & Research

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Field of Dreams Luncheon Celebrates
Ten Years of Protecting Children

Philadelphia’s College of Physicians was the scene of the Field Center’s 3rd Annual Field of Dreams Luncheon, held on November 1st. Elected officials, child advocates, current and former students, Field Center supporters, and medical, social work, psychiatry, legal and other professionals gathered to celebrate the Field Center’s Ten Years of Protecting Children.

Popular NBC10 meteorologist Sheena Parveen served as the Emcee for the event, which honored Bucks County District Attorney David Heckler with the Alan Lerner Child Advocacy Award for his work as the Chair of the Pennsylvania Task Force on Child Protection. Mr. Heckler was presented with his award by Dr. Cindy Christian, a member of the Task Force and Chair of Child Abuse Prevention at the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia. Mr. Heckler held a session with Penn students prior to the luncheon, sharing his experiences and answering questions on the task force and legislative process.

Penn Law faculty Kara Finck named Brittany Strandell as the Alan Lerner Fellow in Child Welfare Policy for the 2013-14 academic year. Ms. Strandell, who is completing a joint degree in law and medical ethics, will spend the academic year as a member of the Field Center’s interdisciplinary team, conducting legal research for the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare’s Health Care Workgroup on health outcomes for children in the child welfare system as well as monitoring the progress of child welfare legislation in Harrisburg.

The Field Center marked this auspicious occasion by highlighting its significant accomplishments in its first ten years as well as its current and emerging work. The Field of Dreams Luncheon is one of ten special events being held to commemorate Ten Years of Protecting Children.

Photos on page 4.

One Child, Many Hands: A Multidisciplinary Conference on Child Welfare

The Field Center’s 5th biennial conference, One Child, Many Hands: A Multidisciplinary Conference on Child Welfare, was held on June 12 through 14, 2013. Story on page 2.

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From left to right: Phila. First Asst. DA Ed McCann, Field Center Exec. Dir. Debra Schilling Wolfe, Montgomery County DA Risa Vetri Ferman, Bucks County DA David Heckler, Delaware County DA Jack Whelan, Greg Rowe, Dr. Cindy Christian
The Field Center for Children's Policy, Practice, and Research

Guided by the Schools of Social Policy & Practice, Law, Medicine and Nursing, 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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Renowned screenwriter and subject of the autobiographical film, Antwone Fisher, delivered the conference’s opening keynote address. His moving and powerful story of being born in prison to a life in foster care, residential treatment, and ultimately the Navy, spoke of resilience and overcoming a history not unlike that faced by many in the child welfare system.

Additional keynotes were delivered by Rep. Louise Williams Bishop on her personal journey as a survivor of sexual abuse, Dorothy Roberts, Esq. on Child Welfare and Social Justice, and Dr. Richard Gelles on the future of child welfare. The closing keynote address of the conference was named in honor of Gelles who will be retiring as dean of the University of Pennsylvania’s School of Social Policy & Practice in June 2014.

One Child, Many Hands offers unique and cutting edge plenary panels and this year was no exception. Plenary Panels included The Role, Responsibility, and Ethics of the Media in Reporting of Child Abuse and Jerry Sandusky as an Agent of Social Change: A View From the Inside’, featuring the key change agents involved in that tragic case.

The conference was rounded out with 36 additional breakout sessions featuring presentations by over 100 leading experts from across the country.

The next One Child, Many Hands: A Multidisciplinary Conference on Child Welfare will be held in June, 2015.
In an effort to increase permanency, current child welfare policy and practice prioritizes formal kinship placements for children in foster care. Recent inquiry into kinship care has shown, however, that an increased chance of permanency in a placement does not necessarily equate to maximizing the well-being of the child. In order to improve kinship placements, it is essential to expand focus beyond permanency and explore how the child welfare system can improve safety and well-being outcomes for children in kinship foster care.

When compared to non-kin foster care placements, research has shown that there are positive outcomes that result from placing children with kin. The kinship model reduces the trauma children experience when they are removed from their homes. Research has shown that children in kinship care experience greater rates of permanency than children in non-kinship care. Children in kinship care experience fewer placements in their lifetime and are less likely to re-enter care after being placed with kin. Additionally, children in kinship foster care are more likely to create lasting bonds with their caregivers, contributing to their overall well-being later in life. Despite some of the positive permanency outcomes related to kinship placements, there is conflicting evidence in regards to child well-being. Research proving the increase in permanency for children in kinship care, some claim, is misleading. Research shows that while kinship placements do last longer than non-kin placements, these placements are being maintained when issues are present in the home. Increased permanency in kinship homes may be the result of less monitoring and supervision by caseworkers who overlook issues with kin placements that would possibly be grounds for removal in a non-kin home. One of the biggest concerns with kinship care is that child welfare workers tend to respond to issues in kinship homes differently than in unrelated foster placements. Research has shown that when a placement was deemed unsatisfactory by case workers, 27% of children remained in their kinship placements while only 5% of children remained in non-kinship placements.

In addition to the variation in monitoring kinship homes, there are several other factors that distinguish kinship placements from traditional placements. Kinship caregivers face a multitude of stressors that unrelated caregivers do not. The American Bar Association reported in 2007 that over 54% of children residing in kinship care live in extreme poverty. Research has shown that relatives are often concerned with their financial ability to care for the child. Kinship caregivers are usually unprepared for children to enter their home and thus tend to have more difficulty than non-kin caregivers coping with the new addition to their household. A majority of kinship caregivers are older and many are living with health issues. Additionally, kinship caregivers are more likely to have hostile relationships with the child’s birth parents. It is evident that kinship caregivers require more support and supervision from caseworkers than their non-kin counterparts, but research has indicated that kinship caregivers consistently receive less support from the child welfare system.

Despite the stressors obviously present in kinship families, child welfare agencies continue to promote kinship placement in order to maintain some continuity in a child’s life. Continuity for the child could prove to be problematic, however, because a majority of children find continuity in impoverished neighborhoods that may be lacking resources and a strong social fabric. It can be argued that staying with kin in impoverished neighborhoods could potentially hinder the child’s ability to realize a high standard of well-being. Kinship foster care agencies should consider that, while there are community strengths and benefits in a child staying in their area of origin, children may not be able to have all of their needs met. In order for kinship care to maximize the well-being of the child, child welfare agencies need to provide additional supports to kinship families to combat the stressors they experience. When placing children with kin, it is integral that foster care agencies work to meet the needs of the child that are not served by neighborhoods.

Children between the ages of zero and five are most at risk of being affected negatively by the neighborhood in which they live. The effects on these children should be taken into particular consideration, given that 42% of all children entering into foster care are under the age of five. Children in impoverished communities are more likely to experience violence and receive a poor education. Research has shown that children living in impoverished areas experience distinct environmental and psychological stressors that impact cognitive development. This impact on development, in addition to a lack of educational resources, could have deleterious effects on the child’s future ability to maintain well-being. Additional resources should also be provided for children that are placed with kin in impoverished neighborhoods. Poor outcomes for children are often associated with a lack of caregiver access to institutional support, a lack of involvement in programs outside of their community, and fewer and lower quality education opportunities. In order to combat this reality, agencies should offer supportive programs for kinship children that go above and beyond the conventional case management model.

Current federal child welfare policy gives individual states the liberty to establish standards for certifying kinship homes (Title IV E). Emerging research into best practices for kinship care calls for a federally mandated standard for kinship caregivers. Certification standards include mandates on the condition of the caregivers home, relevant background checks, and training programs. Modalities currently utilized in kinship trainings typically mimic non-kin training programs and focus mainly on proper methods of child rearing and system expectations. Although this type of training is often sufficient for non-kin caregivers, kinship trainings need to be mandated to address broader issues. Kinship foster care agencies are encouraged to model kin trainings after non-kin trainings in order to receive federal funding. A distinct federally mandated set of training standards for kinship caregivers would encourage agencies to utilize training modalities that meet the unique needs of kinship caregivers. Although experts in the child welfare field recommend utilizing training programs that meet these criteria, the lack of federal mandate demanding specialized training means that best practice is not consistently implemented. As previously mentioned, kinship caregivers
Field Center Addresses Emerging Issue at Colloquium on Foster Care to College: Strategies for Success

Youth aging out of the foster care system face a myriad of challenges. Unlike their peers who grew up in homes with lifelong parents, foster children face a future without the support of caring, committed adults. This period of emerging adulthood is daunting to young people with the benefit of family resources and without the additional burden of a history of trauma. It is a true test of resilience and perseverance for former foster youth.

While data tells us that approximately 70% of foster youth aspire to attend college, far fewer actually enroll and face an uphill battle to complete their degree. This challenge was the impetus for a colloquium recently held by the Field Center on Foster Care to College: Strategies for Success.

As colleges opened their doors to the new academic year, university representatives, foster care experts, advocates, and researchers attended a half-day colloquium supported by the Philadelphia Foundation. Speakers included Celeste Bodner, Executive Director of FosterClub, Dr. Johanna Greeson, professor and researcher at Penn’s School of Social Policy & Practice, and Jennifer Pokempner, Esq., of the Juvenile Law Center.

The program featured Michigan’s model Center for Fostering Success, with presentations by program staff and students from foster care who are attending three different Michigan colleges. Participants were able to learn about the challenges faced by former foster youth who are attending college and the resources provided to support their journey through Michigan’s higher education system.

The Field Center is looking to follow up this well attended colloquium with a workgroup to identify the needs of foster youth on the campuses of Philadelphia area colleges and help local colleges can develop supports to promote their success.

Panel of students from foster care attending Western Michigan University, Eastern Michigan University, and Saginaw Valley State University

Field of Dreams Luncheon...(Continued From Page 1)

The Field Center honored Chair of the PA Task Force on Child Protection, David Heckler, at this year’s Field of Dreams Luncheon.
THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS!

We are grateful to the following individuals, foundations and organizations for their generous support of the Field Center from January 1, 2012 to November 1, 2013.

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.
Erica Gooch completed her Doctor of Pharmacy Degree from Hampton University in 2006 and was subsequently granted a fellowship in Pharmaceutical Benefit Risk Management at Johnson & Johnson (J&J). She has worked in various capacities at Janssen Research & Development, LLC, one of the pharmaceutical companies of Johnson & Johnson, in product safety evaluation, master data governance, and regulatory intelligence for the past 7 years. Erica is currently a Global Regulatory Policy and Intelligence Associate Director, where she benchmarks competitors and determines precedents to inform regulatory decision-making.

Erica completed her certification in Nonprofit Board Leadership from J&J and Seton Hall University in July 2013 where she learned various aspects of successfully running a nonprofit organization, including strategic planning, resource development, and financial oversight. Since joining J&J, she has organized the United Way Campaign for her site, tutored for Reading Stars (a children’s phonics-based reading program), organized a corporate team for the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, and performed various other health education and mentoring activities for children. Erica attended a Young Professionals Council event in July 2013 and was immediately drawn to the mission and vision of the Field Center. She is thrilled to contribute her unique talents and perspective to the Field Center as a member of the Young Professionals Council.

Brittany Strandell is a third year law student at the University of Pennsylvania Law School. In conjunction with earning her JD, she will be receiving her masters in bioethics from Penn’s Perelman School of Medicine. Brittany has a strong interest in health law and child welfare issues. Brittany is a senior research assistant at Wharton’s Leonard Davis Institute where she researches and analyzes legislation pertaining to the Affordable Care Act’s Health Insurance Marketplaces. She is the President of the Health Law Group, a student group whose mission is to raise awareness about health-related legal issues, and a Co-Director of the Health Law and Policy Project, a pro bono group that connects students interested in health law with pro bono projects in the Philadelphia area.

Brittany graduated summa cum laude from Wesleyan College with a bachelor’s degree in Psychology where she conducted cognitive research, earning a prize in neuroscience and publishing an article in a peer-reviewed scientific journal. As this year’s Alan Lerner Fellow in Child Welfare Policy, Brittany will be conducting research for Department of Public Welfare Health Care Work Group. To support the Field Center’s effort to implement system-level change following the Sandusky tragedy, Brittany will be researching the progress of pending child welfare legislation in Harrisburg.

Kendra Schwindt is currently a second year MSW candidate at the University of Pennsylvania School of Social Policy & Practice. Kendra joined the Field Center for Children’s Policy, Practice and Research in September of 2013. Kendra received her BS in Communication Studies from Boston University in 2010. While an undergraduate student, Kendra coded and analyzed data derived from an international comparison study on how children define war and peace.

Upon completing her undergraduate degree, Kendra lived and worked in a children’s home in rural Kenya. While in Kenya, she was also able to work with the local community promoting microfinance initiatives. After returning to the United States, Kendra went on to work at a first-year turnaround charter school in Brooklyn, NY. Kendra spent her first year as an MSW student working as a case manager for children in kinship foster care. Kendra is interested in researching and promoting the utilization of community development techniques in order to promote a more prevention-focused global child welfare system.

Erica Gooch, PharmD

Save the Date!
The Field Center’s Young Professionals Council invites you to a

Holiday Happy Hour Fundraiser

December 3, 2013
6:00 pm - 8:00 pm

Milkboy
11th and Chestnut

$20 donation per person

Proceeds to provide assistance to foster youth pursuing secondary education and to support the work of The Field Center.

For more information, please visit the Field Center website: www.fieldcenteratpenn.org
Event & Sponsor
Community Symposium: Parental Representation in Dependency Proceedings: Best Practice from a Multidisciplinary Perspective
The Field Center for Children’s Policy, Practice & Research at the University of Pennsylvania

Date & Location
December 3, 2013
Philadelphia, PA

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December 2 - 4, 2013
Anaheim, CA

Beyond the Bench XXII: Equal Access to Justice for Children and Families: The Legacies of Clarence Earl Gideon and Martin Luther King, Jr.
Judicial Council of California - Administrative Office of the Courts

Phone: (415) 865-7739
Email: ccfo@jud.ca.gov
Website: http://www.courts.ca.gov/7873.htm

January 28 - 31, 2014
San Diego, CA

28th Annual San Diego International Conference on Child and Family Maltreatment
The Chadwick Center for Children and Families

Phone: (858) 966-4972
Email: sdcconference@rchsd.org
Website: www.sandiegoconference.org

April 13 - 16, 2014
Fort Lauderdale, FL

32nd Annual Protecting Our Children National American Indian Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect
National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA)

Phone: (503) 222-4044
Email: lauren@nicwa.org
Website: http://www.nicwa.org/conference/

April 29 - May 2, 2014
New Orleans, LA

19th National Conference on Child Abuse & Neglect
Children’s Bureau, Administration for Children and Families

Phone: (703) 243-0495
Email: NCCAN@pal-tech.com
Website: http://www.pal-tech.com/web/NCAN19/

May 28 - May 30, 2014
Daytona Beach, FL

21st Annual Foster Care Conference “Footsteps to the Future”
Daniel Memorial

Phone: (904) 296-1055
Email: info@danielkids.org
Website: http://www.danielkids.org/page.aspx?id=443

June 5 - 8, 2014
Orlando, FL

2014 NFPA/FSFAPA National Education Conference
National Foster Parent Association/Florida State Foster Adoptive Parent Association

Phone: (800) 557-5238
Email: sshafer@nfpaonline.org
Website: http://nfpaonline.org/Conference

July 16 - 20, 2014
Washington, DC

Improving Children’s Mental Health Care In an Era of Change, Challenge, and Innovation: The Role of the System of Care Approach
Georgetown University for Child and Human Development

Phone: (202) 687-5000
Email: childrensmh@georgetown.edu
Website: http://guccidentr.georgetown.edu/TrainingInstitutes.html

Kalish, S. (1993). Kinship care...continued from page 4)
are more likely to have hostile relationships with birth parents, so kinship foster care agencies should be required to address how to appropriately handle these relationships during training. Caregivers are generally unprepared to support a new addition to their home, so training should also address ways for caregivers to cope with the stress of unexpectedly taking a child into their home.

Given the increased number of kinship families living in poverty, kinship parents should be provided with venues to improve their economic status. It is expected that the stipend given to caregivers will cover the expenses of the child and assure that the child is having his or her basic needs met. Given that most kinship caregivers are living in poverty, this stipend is simply not enough to maintain a family. Training for kinship parents should focus more on helping to raise the family out of poverty – whether that be through offering financial literacy classes or through offering vocational training opportunities. Additionally, it would be beneficial for training to include information about benefits and how to navigate public systems so that families can receive all of the benefits to which they are entitled.

Despite the current gaps in programming, kinship foster care shows great promise in improving outcomes for children. While the system has been successful in attempting to preserve families through kinship placements, it has thus far failed to fully promote kinship environments that are truly in the best interests of the child. At present, kinship programs and child welfare policy are providing minimum assistance to families while expecting maximum outcomes for children. The field of child welfare would benefit by taking a more holistic approach to supporting kinship foster homes - finding permanent placements for children is simply not enough.

Newsletter Highlights...

- Foster Care to College: Strategies for Success
- Kinship Foster Care – Permanency over Positive Outcomes for Children