News From the Field
National child welfare policy, practice and research

From the Desk of the Executive Director

It is with both gratitude and sadness that I write this final letter from the Field Center Executive Director's desk. After 16 years as the Founding Executive Director of the Field Center, I will be retiring from the University of Pennsylvania at the end of 2019.

It has been an honor to help launch and steward this unique and important organization. Working alongside some of the great thinkers and change agents in the child welfare field, I have had the honor to participate in initiatives that have positively impacted the lives of victims of child abuse and neglect and those involved in the child welfare system. Over the years, we have helped to change laws and policies, conducted critical translational research, brought evidence-based practice and new programs to the community, and trained and mentored those who will continue this work for many years to come.

I want to thank each and every one of you for the opportunity to collaborate on our shared mission over the years. Without the spirit of working together to serve as voices for vulnerable children, we could never have done so much. Ever since I made my first family visit as a fledgling child protective services worker in Massachusetts straight out of graduate school 40 years ago, I knew that child welfare was my calling. Stay inspired to continue this important work. Children's lives depend on all of us.

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

THE INDIAN CHILD WELFARE ACT WINDS THROUGH THE COURTS
BY RYAN MCEVOY, LERNER FELLOW, PENN LAW 2021

In December 2018, the Field Center reported on a successful legal challenge to the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 (ICWA)[i] in a federal district court in Texas. In that case, Brackeen v. Zinke, non-American Indian prospective adoptive parents, along with Texas, Louisiana, and Indiana, alleged that ICWA “mandates racial and ethnic preferences, in direct violation of state and federal law,” and the judge struck down large parts of the law on different bases.[ii]

This past August, a three-judge panel of the Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit partially reversed the lower court, a decision which would have left ICWA intact.[iii] But now, the Fifth Circuit has granted the plaintiffs’ motions for a rehearing en banc, or as a full panel.[iv] Both sides are now gearing up for the new hearing, which will be held next month.

Field Center Faculty Director to give TEDx Talk

On January 11th, 2020, Dr. Johanna Greeson, Field Center Faculty Director, is speaking at TEDxLincolnUniversity, the first TEDx event at the nation’s first Historically Black College/University.

The theme is ‘Beyond the Visible’ and Dr. Greeson’s talk on older youth in foster care is entitled “How to Heal the Aging Out Crisis.”

Click here to learn more about this event.

Help advance the work of the Field Center

The Field Center is pioneering innovative and critical work in child welfare.

In the spirit of this giving season, please consider a donation to support our continued work to ensure children are truly protected from abuse and neglect. All gifts made to the Field Center will be generously matched dollar for dollar by the Joseph and Marie Field Foundation.

DONATE NOW

To learn more about how you can support
CELEBRATING 10 YEARS OF PROJECT PENN

The Field Center is celebrating the 10th anniversary of Project PENN, a court-based information and referral program for families awaiting dependency (child abuse and neglect) proceedings at Philadelphia Family Court. Project PENN first opened its doors in 2009 after a Field Center research study identified that a majority of these families were experiencing long wait times before seeing a judge, expressed a lack of knowledge about court proceedings, and had limited information about social service programs available to them.

Over the past decade, Project PENN has served more than 2000 individuals, families, and professionals waiting at Philadelphia Family Court. Annually, clients receive approximately 7,000 resource brochures on a variety of topics which are available inside the courthouse. Project PENN collects data on utilization and client need, and annual reports have consistently shown that homelessness and housing resources, employment resources, and education have been priorities within the community. These topics will be the center of focus as Project PENN enters 2020.

As Project PENN enters a new decade of service, the Field Center is excited to continue to assist families with accessing critical community-based services. This project is funded through the generous support of the Nancy Glickenhaus Family Court Program.

ANNOUNCING THE DEPARTURE OF FACULTY DIRETOR DR. TONY GARCIA

Field Center Faculty Director Dr. Tony Garcia will be leaving Penn’s School of Social Policy & Practice (SP2) at the end of the semester to join the faculty at the University of Kentucky’s College of Social Work and School of Medicine’s Child Trauma Center. Most recently, Dr. Garcia had relocated to Kentucky to be with his family and has been commuting to Penn to teach and support the center’s work.

Dr. Garcia joined the School of Social Policy & Practice at the University of Pennsylvania as an Assistant Professor in 2012 and was subsequently awarded tenure and promoted to Associate Professor. In addition to his role as one of the Field Center’s faculty directors, along with Dr. Johanna Greeson, Dr. Garcia co-founded and co-directed SP2’s Child Well-being & Child Welfare Specialization.

At the Field Center, Dr. Garcia worked on a variety of projects and initiatives, including our child fatality research, work on insular and isolated communities, and the development of a cross-disciplinary academic specialization in child advocacy and child welfare at Penn. We are grateful for his contributions and wish him well with his new appointment.

A PRAGMATIC APPROACH: EXPANDING ACCESS TO JUSTICE FOR SURVIVORS OF CHILDHOOD SEXUAL ABUSE IN PENNSYLVANIA

BY RYAN MCEVOY, LERNER FELLOW, PENN LAW 2021

On November 26, 2019, Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf signed into law [House Bill 893](https://www.legis.state.pa.us/legis/105/pdf/2019-2020/sen/2019-2020-2046.pdf) (H.B. 962), which substantially alters the statute of limitations for survivors of childhood sexual abuse in both criminal and civil matters. This law eliminates the statute of limitations for criminal actions stemming from “major child sexual abuse crimes” related to children under eighteen years old, whereas a criminal action must have previously been initiated before the victim’s fiftieth birthday. Members of this group can also now start civil actions until they are fifty-five years old, well above the current limit of thirty years of age. In cases involving young adult victims who are abused after they turn eighteen but before they reach age twenty-four, the state can now bring charges within twenty years of the occurrence of the crime (over the current twelve years), while victims can commence civil actions until they reach the age of thirty (they currently have just two years after the abuse to file suit). The law does not apply retroactively.

The law passed with overwhelming bipartisan support: 182-5 in the House and 48-0 in the Senate. The bill’s sponsor Rep. Mark Rozzi (D-126th), himself a survivor of childhood sexual abuse, celebrated the bill becoming law, but noted, “We know our work is not done today, it’s going to continue.” Indeed, the measure was only the first part of a more comprehensive reform envisioned by the legislator for opening courthouse doors.

A related proposal, [House Bill 963](https://www.legis.state.pa.us/legis/105/pdf/2019-2020/sen/2019-2020-2046.pdf) (H.B. 963), would amend the state constitution to create a two-year “look-back” window for survivors of childhood sexual abuse to bring forward civil suits otherwise barred by the statute of limitations. The bill has been passed by the House and Senate with broad support, but both chambers must pass it again next term before it can be put to a voter referendum. At the earliest, that would take place in the spring of 2021.

Upcoming Child Welfare Conferences, Trainings, & Events

24th Annual SSWR Conference
“Reducing Racial & Economic Inequality”
Jan 15-19, 2020
Washington, DC
More Information

35th Annual San Diego International Conference on Child & Family Maltreatment
Jan 25-31, 2020
San Diego, CA
More Information

Zero Abuse Project Summit 2020
Mar 23-26, 2020
Orlando, FL
More Information

21st Annual Families & Fathers National Conference
Feb 26-28, 2020
Los Angeles, CA
More Information

National Conference on Juvenile Justice
Mar 22-25, 2020
Pittsburgh, PA
More Information

National Children’s Advocacy Center 36th Annual Symposium on Child Abuse
Mar 23-26, 2020
Huntsville, AL
More Information

American Adoption Congress 41st International Adoption Conference
April 15-18, 2020
San Diego, CA
More Information

27th Annual National Foster Care Conference
May 6-8, 2020
Kissimmee, FL
More Information

2020 National IV-E Roundtable for Child Welfare Training and Education
More Information
CAMPUS SUPPORT PROGRAMS FOR FOSTER YOUTH CONTINUE TO GROW WITH FIELD SUPPORT

The Field Center currently supports 17 colleges and universities around Pennsylvania in the development and maintenance of new campus-based support programs for students who have experienced foster care. The network of institutions includes public and private colleges, large and small schools, and urban and rural campuses across the entire Commonwealth. With help from the Field Center, these schools have begun to develop and enhance programming and services across multiple departments, including housing, counseling, financial aid, academic support, and more.

Institutions are utilizing diverse strategies to support students with experience in foster care with accessing and succeeding in higher education. Single Points of Contact or Campus Coaches report that their schools are centering programming around what students want and need by including them in the planning process. Schools are actively creating resources for students that help maintain stability in their students' lives, including designated staff, year-round housing, food pantries, and emergency funding. On some campuses, students are taking the lead in developing programming. They are looking to create space to connect with other youth who have experienced foster care, create peer mentorship programs, and give back to the communities in which they live.

To view the list of institutions with campus-based support programs and learn more about the Field Center's work in this area, please visit the Field Center's Foster Care to College website at www.fostercaretocollege.org.

PENN LAW STUDENTS INTERN AT THE FIELD CENTER

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 2019-20 academic year is in full swing with two students from Penn Law, completing the section of law and child welfare policy.

Ryan McEvoy is a J.D. Candidate in his second year at Penn Law and the Field Center's 2019-20 Lerner Fellow in Child Welfare Policy. Ryan is an Associate Editor of the University of Pennsylvania Law Review. He earned his bachelor's degree in International Studies, German Studies, and History from the University of Richmond in 2017. During his time in Richmond, he studied abroad in Bangalore, India, where he conducted research on child labor legislation. After college, Ryan worked as a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant in Germany, instructing students in grades six through twelve. This past summer, he worked as a legal intern in the Special Victims Bureau of the Brooklyn District Attorney's Office.

Gabriella Ravida is a 2020 J.D. Candidate at Penn Law and an M.S.S.P. Candidate at Penn's School of Social Policy and Practice. She completed her Community Experience Program through Morgan Lewis and her M.S.S.P. Internship during Summer 2019 at the Field Center, where she is continuing on with an independent study. She earned her bachelor's degree in public policy from Princeton University in 2015. After graduating, Gabriella worked as a substitute teacher in York, Pennsylvania. Gabriella is the Editor-in-Chief of the University of Pennsylvania Law Review and enjoyed assisting unemployed Philadelphians through the pro bono Employment Advocacy Project.

FIELD CENTER RECENT PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

Protecting Children in the Age of Alternative Facts: Lessons from the Front Line.
Program Manager Sarah Wasch, MSW presented at the Paving the Way to Educational Success Conference in Pocono Manor, Secondary Opportunities for Students Experiencing Homelessness and with Experience in Foster Care: Making It Happen.
Field Center experts recently published the following:
https://thejns.org/pediatrics/view/journals/j-neurosurg-pediatr/24/5/article-p481.xml
Some students in Pennsylvania foster care system can get college tuition waivers
WGAL News 8

HARRISBURG, Pa. - The Pennsylvania Department of Human Services secretary is highlighting a tuition waiver program for some students in the foster care system. Secretary Teresa Miller spoke Monday about the Fostering Independence Through Education Act, which provides tuition waivers for students who were in foster care or adopted from foster care. This includes students who are or were in the state foster care system at age 16 or older.

From Foster Care to Cabrini
Cabrini News

Cabrini was one of the four schools in PA—the only private school—selected in 2017 to partner with the Field Center for Children’s Policy, Practice and Research at the University of Pennsylvania in its Foster Care to College program, which helps college-bound youth who have lived in foster care.

Protecting Children, Preserving Dreams
The Field Center is a collaboration of

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Click the link below to learn more about The Field Center
www.fieldcenteratpenn.org

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