As we adapt to living and working under the social distancing guidelines required by COVID19, The Field Center is acutely aware that the professionals, families, children, and youth involved with the child welfare system face unprecedented additional challenges. This short issue of News From the Field reflects that reality and aims to provide a brief overview of our response during this time.

We continue our work remotely, with various research projects underway and future program development goals remaining intact. Our social media has pivoted to almost exclusively cover the child welfare system's response to COVID19. We participated in the Virtual Town Halls for Older Foster Youth where Children's Bureau Associate Commissioner Dr. Jerry Milner answered questions from young people affected by COVID19. We applaud the Children's Bureau for responding quickly and issuing guidance to child welfare agencies.

We also want to direct current/former youth in foster care and child welfare professionals to the Think of Us Child Welfare COVID-19 Command Center for resources and guidance during the COVID19 pandemic. Think of Us has been a pioneer in the space of systems change and leveraging technology to upgrade the child welfare system.

The child welfare news is dominated by stories of struggling systems, challenges in protecting vulnerable children and youth, and preventing the spread of the virus for individuals housed in close quarters. We are grateful to the Chronicle of Social Change for tirelessly reporting on the virus's impact. To visit the Chronicle's continuing coverage of the pandemic and how it is changing child welfare and juvenile justice, click here.

As we continue to engage in work that places the wellbeing of children and youth front and center with a focus on innovation, impact, and justice, we celebrate our many partners and collaborators in this vital effort. Human rights activist Desmund Tutu says 'Bringing people together is what I call 'ubuntu,' which means 'I am because we are.' Far too often people think of themselves as just individuals, separated from one another, whereas you are connected and what you do affects the whole world. When you do well, it spreads out; it is for the whole of humanity.'

The Field Center is because we are, which we feel even more poignantly in this time of COVID19. Thank you for partnering with us to do well!

Warmly,

Johanna K.P. Greeson
Managing Faculty Director
The Field Center for Children's Policy, Practice & Research
Field Center Faculty Directors Dr. Johanna Greeson and Dr. Sara Jaffee, along with Program Manager Sarah Wasch, recently launched an online survey study in response to the COVID-19 crisis. The purpose of this national study, titled "The Experiences of Foster Youth During COVID-19" is to assess how older youth in foster care and those who recently aged out of foster care are faring with COVID-19 in the key areas of basic needs, education, employment, finances, personal connections, and health/mental health.

Youth aging out of foster care and those who have recently aged out are among the most marginalized groups in this country. They experience countless hardships when they transition from foster care to adulthood on their own, and with the added difficulties of COVID19, these young people are among those bearing the heaviest burden of this crisis. By gaining a clearer picture of these burdens, stakeholders will be better able to advocate for the needs of these young people.

The online survey is available until May 2, 2020. Any youth ages 18-23 in foster care or who aged out of foster care is eligible to complete the survey, which takes approximately 10-15 minutes. Participants will be offered the option of being entered into a raffle at the end of the survey to win one of twelve $25 Target gift cards.

The Field Center will disseminate preliminary results soon after the survey closes with the goal of publishing a future academic paper on the national response to COVID19 as it affects older youth in foster care and aged out of foster care. To visit the online survey, click here.

For more information about the study, please contact the principal investigator, Dr. Johanna Greeson, by phone (215-573-9779) or email (jgreeson@sp2.upenn.edu).

Stay up to date with the latest in child welfare by following the Field Center on social media. Click the buttons below to follow The Field Center.

Protecting Children, Preserving Dreams

The Field Center is a collaboration of

The Field Center is a member of

Founding Benefactors: Joseph and Marie Field