Clinic program enhanced with the addition of child psychiatry fellows

In August, child psychiatry fellows from Hershey Medical Center began rotations in the Children’s Advocacy Clinic. The first visiting child psychiatry fellow was Dr. Surya Gupta, who gave a presentation to the law students on the use of antidepressants in children and youth. The lecture was followed by a Q&A session where students asked questions about issues faced by their child clients. Dr. Gupta also attended a hearing to observe the legal proceedings in a child dependency case, and reviewed medical records of a client who was experiencing a medical problem. Other child psychiatry fellows have visited the clinic and provided similar services. Dr. Fauzia Mahr of Hershey, Director Child & Adolescent Psychiatry Fellowship Training and Assistant Professor of Psychiatry and Pediatrics, helped to facilitate the rotation.

Internationally renowned photographer shares work

The Center for Children and the Law and the Center for Immigrants’ Rights hosted a brown bag lunch discussion with Richard Ross, an internationally renowned photographer whose current work focuses on juveniles in detention and treatment. Mr. Ross’s current work, “Juvenile-in-Justice,” is the topic of a forthcoming book of the same title. Several clients of the Children’s Advocacy Clinic have resided in one of the juvenile detention facilities, featured in the presentation.

New Fellow joins clinic staff

The clinic is pleased to announce the hiring of Tim Smith as its new clinical fellow. A graduate of the class of 2012, Tim participated in the clinic as a legal intern during his time as a student at Penn State Law. Former supervising attorney and Director of the Public Interest Programming Kate Cramer Lawrence, who provided six years of dedicated service to the Law School, is now a managing attorney with Women In Need in Franklin County. We wish Kate the best as she continues her passion of practicing public interest law.
Clinic student Jessica Parisi ‘14 recently authored an article entitled “Act 91: Positive Changes for Older Youth in Care” for the PBA Children’s Rights Committee newsletter. The article outlines some of the changes to the law, including various provisions that expand the criteria for youth to stay in care past age 18 and allowing them to re-enter care before turning 21 if they aged out. The Children’s Advocacy Clinic has advocated for years that youth should have the chance to re-enter care if their plans for independence are unsuccessful. Signed into law on July 5 by Governor Corbett, the new law has already allowed youth who were struggling with homelessness after discharge from care, to re-enter the program.

Student writes article for PBA Children’s Rights Committee

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Clinic moves location

Over the summer, the Children’s Advocacy Clinic moved its operations from Pitt Street into office space adjacent to Lewis Katz Hall. Our new mailing address is 371 W. South Street, Carlisle, PA 17013. Phone and fax numbers remain the same: 717-243-2968 (phone); 717-241-3556 (fax).

Collaboration continues to improve the process of reporting child abuse

Dr. Benjamin Levi, Director of the Center for Protection of Children at Penn State Children’s Hospital, and Gary Shuey, social work supervisor at the Children’s Advocacy Clinic, continue to work on improving the process of reporting child abuse through the Look Out For Child Abuse website (LOFCA).

They recently met with Deputy Secretary of the Office of Children, Youth and Families in the Department of Public Welfare Bev Mackereth, as well as with information technology staff of the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania in an effort to “modernize and streamline” filing of the CY47 child abuse report form. Currently, the CY47 is completed by hand and is faxed to the Department of Public Welfare. Dr. Levi and Mr. Shuey are working to enable the form to be completed on a computer and sent immediately through secure email to CHILDLINE and the appropriate county. Step one, which enables anyone to logon to the www.lookoutforchildabuse website and complete the online interactive CY47, is finished.

Both Cumberland and Dauphin counties are piloting a secure email system where the CY47 is completed online and sent electronically. The original online form is then purged from the system to ensure HIPAA compliance. We are working with the Commonwealth to share some ideas for a re-design of the form making it more functional and informative, with the goal of streamlining the process for submitting reports of child abuse.
Task force releases report

On November 27, 2012, the Pennsylvania Task Force on Children Protection released its report on suggested reforms to Pennsylvania laws and practice on how to provide better protection for children. After Mr. Sandusky was charged with crimes of child abuse, the Task Force had multiple hearings and meetings to gather suggestions on how the law should change. The Task Force is now recommending a complete rewrite to the Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law. In the new year, the PA Legislature will be introducing legislation to implement the proposed changes. The proposals dramatically change how child abuse is defined, who will be legally required to report child abuse, and how child abuse cases are handled across the state. The Children’s Advocacy Clinic policy students will closely monitor the legislative process of changes.