



## APRIL 26, 2012 CHILDREN'S ADVOCATES' ROUNDTABLE

### SPEAKER BIOS:

#### CA BUDGET REALIGNMENT:

**Frank Mecca** is the Executive Director of the County Welfare Directors Association of California (CWDA), a nonprofit association representing the human service directors from each of California's 58 counties. The association seeks to promote a human services system that encourages self-sufficiency of families and communities, and protects vulnerable children and adults from abuse and neglect. Prior to joining CWDA in November of 1991, Mecca served as a Fiscal and Policy Analyst for the Legislative Analyst's Office, where he had oversight responsibility for most child welfare programs, including Child Welfare Services, Foster Care and Adoptions.

Mecca is a well-respected expert in State and Federal Child Welfare Policy. He holds a Master's Degree in Public Affairs with a concentration in Social Welfare Policy from the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas, Austin. He has an undergraduate degree in Government and Economics from Franklin and Marshall College in Lancaster, PA.

**Amy Lemley** is the policy director of the John Burton Foundation, founded by former California State Senator John Burton. The Foundation is dedicated to improving the quality of life for California's homeless children and developing policy solutions to prevent homelessness. In her role as policy director, Ms. Lemley develops and implements the legislative, regulatory and administrative strategies to achieve the goals of the Foundation. Prior to joining the John Burton Foundation, Ms. Lemley was the executive director and co-founder of The First Place Fund for Youth, a nationally recognized program providing affordable housing and supportive services to former foster youth. She is on the California Blue Ribbon Commission on Children in Foster Care.

**Angie Schwartz** is the Policy Director at The Alliance for Children's Rights in Los Angeles, where she works to improve the welfare of children living in poverty and in foster care through systemic reforms. Angie has been instrumental in passage of several key reforms aimed at improving the transition of foster youth out of foster care and into adulthood.

Angie has been involved in numerous legislative initiatives designed to improve California's child welfare system including work on passage and implementation of The California Fostering Connections to Success Act (Assembly Bill 12), which provides foster youth the support they need to succeed as adults by extending the foster care benefits and supports up to age 20. Angie was also instrumental in the creation and statewide implementation of Assembly Bill 1633 (2005) and Assembly Bill 1331 (2007), which were enacted to ensure that foster youth with disabilities have improved access to Social Security benefits before they emancipate from care. In addition, Angie has authored numerous articles about improving benefit programs and supports for children in out-of-home care.

Angie's work on behalf of foster children also includes serving as lead counsel in several statewide lawsuits filed to protect their rights to needed financial benefits and services.

Prior to joining the Alliance, Angie was a staff attorney with the Public Interest Law Project and a Skadden Fellow at the National Center for Youth Law. Angie earned her B.A., Magna Cum Laude, from American University, and her J.D. with distinction from Stanford Law School. Angie lives in Oakland, California with her husband and 4 year old daughter

## **IMPROVING SERVICES, OPPORTUNITIES, & OUTCOMES FOR FOSTER YOUTH**

**Megan Baier** is a Senate Fellow in the office of State Senator Lois Wolk. On behalf of the Senator, she works on issues related to education, health, and human services policy. This year Megan is working on several projects as a part of an innovative strategy to improve outcomes for children and youth involved in the Child Welfare System. This strategy includes legislation to enhance the accountability and the capability of the Child Welfare System to respond to the needs of the children it serves. In addition this strategy includes a project to better understand the connection between the Child Welfare System and criminal justice system, as well as a collaborative project to utilize social networks to more effectively connect homeless youth with relevant community based resources. Megan is also working on legislation that would assist Shriners Hospital, which serves children with specialized conditions, regardless of their insurance coverage, to continue providing services to as many patients as possible. Megan often draws from her prior experience reporting on public health and community development issues for the California Health Report. She holds a B.A. in Politics and Feminist Studies from the University of California, Santa Cruz.