

The Law and Policy of Universal Preschool
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Panelist Bio

Jerome Stermer



Jerry Stermer is President of Voices for Illinois Children, where he has led advocacy campaigns on a broad range of child well-being issues during the past 19 years. Voices is making Illinois a much better place for children by ensuring earlier investments for children, improving education, health care and other vital services. As a statewide, privately funded, public awareness and advocacy organization, Voices works with parents, communities and lawmakers to make children a top priority. Voices has successfully established state tax credits and health insurance for low-income, working families, a dramatic expansion of preschool and other early childhood programs, and a variety of other initiatives for healthy child development.

Voices for Illinois Children publishes a yearly "Illinois Kids Count" report on child well-being and is home to the Budget & Tax Policy Initiative funded by the Ford and Annie E. Casey Foundations. Working with the McCormick Tribune Foundation and other philanthropies, Voices has brought new attention and energy to the importance of the first five years of life through its *Start Early: Learning Begins at Birth* initiative and through the successful campaign to persuade Illinois policy makers to adopt a new statewide Preschool for All policy. Voices is especially well known for its successful use of television and radio advertising designed to persuade Illinoisans to invest more in quality early childhood programs.

Mr. Stermer has served in key leadership roles with a variety of government and private groups including the Governor's Task Force on Human Services Reform and the *A+ Illinois* campaign, which is working to reform the long outdated school finance structures in Illinois. He is a member of the executive committee of the Illinois Early Learning Council. He chairs the board of Voices for America's Children, and is a board member of the United Way of Illinois and the Illinois Children's Healthcare Foundation.

Prior to joining Voices, Mr. Stermer served in both the executive and legislative branches of state government, worked for the Legal Assistance Foundation of Chicago and was a Peace Corps volunteer in Ecuador in South America. He holds a master's degree in political science from the University of Illinois. He is currently an adjunct professor at Northwestern University's School of Education and Social Policy. He and his wife Nancy have two adult children, Rachel and Daniel.