



[Peggy Agron](#) is the **Section Chief** over California Project LEAN (CPL), School Health Connections, and the California Obesity Prevention Program at the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and is the Department's lead for the Childhood Obesity Conference and School Wellness Conference. Ms. Agron is a recognized expert in nutrition and physical activity policy strategies and has particular expertise in school policy. Ms. Agron was part of a national expert panel that developed standards for school foods; these standards were incorporated into California's first school nutrition legislation. Ms. Agron came to CDPH with a broad range of experience, including clinical nutrition, business and management, and many years working at the community-level advocating for changes to support healthy eating and physical activity. Ms. Agron has her Master's Degree in nutrition and is a Registered Dietitian.

California Project LEAN Sacramento-Based Staff



[Victoria Berends](#) serves as Marketing Director for California Project LEAN (CPL). Ms. Berends has worked for CPL for over 10 years and oversees the social marketing and media campaigns for the program. Ms. Berends has been managing nutrition and physical activity projects for over 12 years and has developed numerous tools and trainings to assist with school wellness policy development and implementation. Ms. Berends was competitively selected as one of 10 Social Marketing Specialists nationwide to provide training and technical assistance through the National Training Collaborative for Social Marketing, a joint effort of the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention and the University of South Florida. Prior to this work, Ms. Berends served as Marketing Director of the California Grocers Association and the California Nutrition Network. Ms. Berends earned her Bachelor's of Science from California State University, Sacramento.



[Linda Cowling](#) is a Registered Dietitian and Public Health Nutrition Consultant with California Project LEAN. Her responsibilities include providing trainings and technical assistance to community partners and health advocates on ways to improve the food and beverage environment in schools. Ms. Cowling earned a Bachelor's degree in Nutrition and Clinical Dietetics from the University of California, Berkeley, a Master's degree in Public Health from the University of California, Los Angeles, and a Master's degree in HealthCare Administration from Golden Gate University. Previous work experience includes clinical dietetics, public health nutrition, and the Women, Infants, and Children program.



[Katherine Hawksworth](#) is a Health Educator with California Project LEAN (CPL). Ms. Hawksworth's main responsibilities at CPL include providing technical assistance and trainings on how to engage youths and parents in improving the nutrition and physical activity environments in their schools and communities. Ms. Hawksworth is a former VISTA (Volunteer In Service to America) Volunteer where she dedicated her time working in a nationally recognized afterschool program. Topics that interest her include youth development and engagement, gender issues, nutrition, and physical activity. Ms. Hawksworth earned a Bachelor of Arts in Women's Studies with a minor in Health Education and a Master of Public Health from San Francisco State University.



Maran Kammer Perez serves as a Program Administrator for California Project LEAN (CPL) and has worked for CPL since 1995. Ms. Perez is currently responsible for oversight and administration of budgets and office operations including purchasing, acquisition of equipment, and development of office procedures. Prior to taking over budget responsibilities, Ms. Perez designed promotion materials for CPL. Ms. Perez's background is office management, print design, site advertising, and metal sculpture. Ms. Perez also owns and operates her own design studio.



Ces Murphy is California Project LEAN's Conference Coordinator and is responsible for the program management and leadership of the biennial Childhood Obesity Conference. Ms. Murphy's role includes providing oversight and support to the executive and planning committees and program contractors in event planning, meeting facilitation, sponsor development, grant writing, public relations and conference promotion. Prior to working with Project LEAN, Ms. Murphy worked with an international non-profit organization dedicated to the prevention of unintentional injury to children where she supervised the development and sustainability of community-based coalitions in the western United States.



Laura Rubin is a Physical Activity and Nutrition Specialist for California Project LEAN. Ms. Rubin joined the Project LEAN team in 2010. She is involved in projects that support CPL's work to institute policy and environmental changes that increase healthy food and physical activity options for California youth. Prior to joining Project LEAN, Ms. Rubin worked as a Health Educator for the University of California, Davis. She also has experience working in local health departments, nonprofit agencies, and advocacy organizations. Ms. Rubin received a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and Communication from the University of California, Davis and a Master of Public Health from Boston University.



Cyndi Walter, Project Director with California Project LEAN, oversees training and technical assistance to health advocates across the state trying to improve the school food and physical activity environment. She previously served as Marketing Manager for the California Center for Physical Activity and California Project LEAN. Ms. Walter has received numerous awards for her work, including from the International Association of Business Communicators, Sacramento Chapter; State Information Officer's Council; and Association for Commuter Transportation National Awards. Ms. Walter received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Journalism, News Editorial, from California State University, Fresno.

California Project LEAN Field Staff



[Jane Alvarado](#) is a Project Coordinator in the Central Valley with California Project LEAN. Ms. Alvarado's professional experience includes over seven years of working with rural and urban youth and communities in the Central Valley utilizing environmental prevention strategies. In partnership with communities, Jane has led powerful community change work that included youth-led assessments, media advocacy and policy change. Ms. Alvarado has a Bachelor of Arts degree in Communication from California State University, Fresno and a national certification in non-profit management and leadership from the American Humanics Program.

[Deirdre Kleske](#) serves as a Health Educator based in San Diego. Ms. Kleske's professional experience includes more than two decades in non-profit administration, public relations and board leadership. Ms. Kleske sits on the Leadership Council of the San Diego County Childhood Obesity Initiative and serves as the co-chair of the Initiative's School & After-School Domain. Her focus is to provide training, resources and community connections to schools, districts and organizations working to create healthier school and after-school environments. Kleske holds a bachelor's degree in Business Administration/Marketing from San Diego State University, is a graduate of LEAD San Diego's leadership academy and earned a Group Fitness Instructor certification through the American Council on Exercise.



[Nestor Martinez](#) is a Health Program Specialist with California Project LEAN (CPL) and is based in San Diego. Mr. Martinez has 12 years of experience with CPL developing, implementing, and managing projects. He is fluent in Spanish (bilingual/ bicultural), and has provided consultation to State and National projects addressing Latino populations. He received his Masters degree in Public Health from the University of California, Berkeley, and his undergraduate degree in Nutrition and Physiology from Cal Poly Pomona. Prior to working for Project LEAN, Mr. Martinez worked for the University of California Cooperative Extension where he implemented nutrition education programs in underserved California communities. His special interests include addressing health disparities in chronic disease prevention.