

Institute Director Speaks at ABA Children's Rights National Conference

Diane Sumoski, Director of the W.W. Caruth, Jr. Institute for Children's Rights, recently coordinated and appeared in a program, *Asserting Constitutional Rights of Children in Individual Child Welfare Proceedings and Lessons Learned from Impact Litigation*, at the 16th ABA National Conference on Children & the Law in Washington D.C. The Conference focused on advancing access to justice for children and families. Joining Ms. Sumoski on the panel were Barbara Elias-Perciful, Director of Texas Lawyers for Children, and Ira Lustbader, Litigation Director for Children's Rights.org.

The room was packed with an audience consisting of lawyers and child welfare professionals from around the country. The presentation discussed Constitutional rights of foster children, specifically, the rights of foster children to protection and care; the right to maintain family relationships; the right to sibling access; the right to bodily integrity; and the right to not be discriminated against based on race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity. The panel covered how the law has developed with respect to these rights, primarily through class action impact litigation and how the "on the ground" practitioner can apply the Constitutional rights of these children in advancing the cause of their child clients in court.

Ms. Sumoski and Ms. Elias-Perciful also co-authored an accompanying article included in the Conference materials. The article discussed the case law surrounding the Constitutional rights of children in child welfare matters and how practitioners can utilize those rights to obtain positive results for their child clients.