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Margaret (Peggy) O'Brien-Strain has been a Research Associate for The SPHERE Institute and its affiliate Acumen, LLC since the companies were founded in 1996. Currently, Peggy holds a joint appointment as a Senior Research Associate at the SPHERE Institute and as a staff member at the John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities at Stanford University. She also serves as an adjunct fellow at the Public Policy Institute of California, where she also served as a Research Fellow from 1997 to 2001.

Peggy holds a B.A. in economics from Swarthmore College and a Ph.D. in economics from Stanford University. A specialist on welfare reform in California, she has also written on the Earned Income Tax Credit, the minimum wage, the combined effects of public assistance programs, child support enforcement, and child care.