

**The 2024 Annual Conference on Advancing School Mental Health**  
**Day 2 Keynote Plenary Session: Show me the Money**

*Federal/National and State leaders weigh in on how to pay for school mental health, including new Medicaid opportunities*



**Angela Kimball**

Chief Advocacy Officer, Inseparable

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Angela Kimball is the chief advocacy officer at Inseparable. She is a nationally recognized advocate and policy expert who is passionate about championing better mental health care. Angela has helped advance significant policy changes in mental health and previously served as national director of government relations, policy & advocacy at NAMI. Angela's inspiration is her son, whose life, colored by a diagnosis with bipolar disorder, propels her to fight inequities experienced by people with mental health conditions.



**Meghan Whittaker**

Chief of Staff, United States Department of Education

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Meghan Whittaker is the Chief of Staff and acting Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services at the United States Department of Education. In this capacity, she serves as an advisor to the Assistant Secretary of OSERS on matters related to the education of children and youth with disabilities, as well as employment and community living for youth and adults with disabilities. Before joining the Department of Education,

Meghan served as the director of policy and advocacy at the National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD). In her time at NCLD, she led a team to develop the organization's federal policy agenda and worked to protect the rights of and advance opportunities for individuals with disabilities in early childhood, K-12, and postsecondary education. Before joining NCLD, Meghan worked as an advocate for incarcerated youth and as a therapist for children with academic, behavioral and emotional challenges. Meghan completed her law degree and her master's degree in social work at the Catholic University of America.



**Jean O'Connor**

Project Director, Medicaid School Based Services Technical Assistance Center

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Jean C. O'Connor, JD, DrPH is the Project Director for the Medicaid School Based Services Technical Assistance Center (TAC) and the Director of the Health Practice Group at Econometrica Inc where she works with governments and organizations to improve the health of populations.

She combines her expertise in public health policy and leadership, law, implementation science, and evaluation to develop and implement effective and sustainable solutions for complex health challenges for agencies like CDC, CMS, and AHRQ. Prior to moving into consulting in 2018, she spent almost 20 years in state and federal public health practice, including at CDC and in senior executive roles in two state health departments and a Governor's Office. Dr. O'Connor is also an associate professor at the University of Georgia and an adjunct professor at Emory University Rollins School of Public Health.



### **Scott Hutchins**

School Behavioral Health Unit Supervisor, MDE Office of Health and Safety

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Scott Hutchins is the Supervisor of the School Behavioral Health Unit at Michigan Department of Education (MDE) in the Office of Health and Safety. Scott is a life-long learner committed to servant leadership with a Master's Degree in Educational Leadership from Eastern Michigan University and a Bachelor's Degree from Michigan State University in Elementary Education. Prior to MDE, Scott worked as a teacher and administrator for 20 years in various K-12 settings, including general education, special education, urban, suburban, and rural, and these experiences have provided him with a diverse perspective that informs all of his work. Given that experience, he has seen firsthand the devastating effects of poor behavioral health care for students and the disparities that exist between the advantaged and disadvantaged. Scott is mindful of the unearned benefits he has received because of a systemic structure that grants privileges to some people and withholds them from others. Scott embraces diversity and understands he has a responsibility to work daily to combat discrimination and promote the worth of everyone. Scott is passionate about being a champion for ALL learners and is committed to being better than he was the day before.



### **Karen Thomas**

Medicaid Programs Coordinator, Leon County Schools, Florida

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Karen Thomas is an engaged and experienced advocate for special education and Florida's Medicaid in Schools Programs; Certified School Match and School District Administrative Claiming. Karen has nearly twenty years of experience in Medicaid claim submission, time-study management, provider training and regularly presents on the subject of school-based Medicaid. Karen currently serves as the Region 2 LEA Representative on the National Alliance for Medicaid in Education Leadership Team, as well as the Vice-Chair for Policy, By-Laws and Procedures. In addition to being a self-proclaimed "Medicaid Nerd," Karen enjoys spending time with her family, two dogs, and cheering on her alma mater, Florida State University's Seminole football team.