



2024 FALL CONFERENCE SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES



Melissa Steger, Retired - Associate Director Workers Compensation, The University of Texas System

Session: Keynote - Having Fun with Culture Development and Establishing a Worker Recovery Mindset in Workers Compensation

After 30 years of workers' compensation experience gained from the public, private, and regulatory sectors, Melissa recently retired. She ended her career as the Associate Director of Workers' Compensation for The University of Texas System in August 2024, where she administered the self-insured workers' compensation program for the academic and health institution. Melissa served on the Texas and national boards for PRIMA and held the national presidency in 2021-2022. She received the Texas PRIMA Risk Professional of the Year award, a Servant Heart Award, and the PRIMA Chapter Service Award. She earned her Master of Public Administration degree and is a certified risk manager. She presently serves as a director for the Kids' Chance of Texas and is a trustee, dean, and faculty member for WorkCompCollege.com. Melissa is a strong believer in claim advocacy, loves mentoring, and plans to continue contributing to an industry she loves.



Karen Vickers, Partner Attorney, Vickers Plass, LLC.

Session: Public Sector Tort Claims

Karen has been representing public and private employers for over thirty years. Her practice includes employment counseling as well as representation of clients in adversarial proceedings up to and including trial. A large portion of Karen's practice involves representation of school districts and other public entities in civil rights and tort claims.



Beth Plass, Attorney, Vickers Plass, LLC.

Session: Public Sector Tort Claims

Beth practices in the areas of public body tort and civil rights defense and legal malpractice defense. She represents schools and other special districts, cities, public entities, and attorneys in litigation.



Geoff Sinclair, ARM, Vice President – Public Sector Practice, Brown & Brown Insurance

Session: I'm Too Busy to Review and Understand My Insurance: With These Top Ten Tips and Tricks, You Can Protect Your Entity and Your Job

Geoff began his insurance career in 1996, working as a claims adjuster and supervisor for City County Insurance Services, SDAO, Fred Meyer/Kroger, Portland General Electric, Thrifty/Payless, and the Archdiocese of Portland. In 2002, he transitioned to SDAO as the Director of Claims/Litigation and Property Casualty Coverage for Education Risk Pool (PACE) Services, where he managed the claims office and all contracted services for PACE.

Geoff is a skilled public speaker and trainer, known for his engaging presentations on topics such as board member responsibilities, litigation management, Oregon torts and law, sexual abuse, safety and security, risk management, and cyber risks. He has spoken at numerous conferences, including those hosted by SDAO, OASBO, OSSOA, PRIMA, OFSMA, PACE, OFCA, OWRC, and the Colorado Special Districts Association.

He holds a BS in Business Economics from Willamette University and is a licensed agent in Oregon, Washington, Alaska, and Wyoming, with an Associate in Risk Management (ARM) designation. Geoff serves as a non-voting board member of the Oregon Association of School Business Officials (OASBO) and an associate board member of the Oregon School Safety Officers Association (OSSOA). Additionally, he is on the Make-A-Wish Foundation of Oregon Ambassador Board, having previously served as a board member and chair.



Marcus Pitts, ARM, AINS, Account Executive – Public Practice, Brown & Brown Insurance

Session: I'm Too Busy to Review and Understand My Insurance: With These Top Ten Tips and Tricks, You Can Protect Your Entity and Your Job

Marcus began his career 22 years ago as a liability and property claims specialist for a multi-national self-insured senior living provider. Over the following 11 years, he managed and later directed various facets of the risk management program, including property and liability claims, workers' compensation, safety, loss prevention, and risk transfer.

In 2014, Marcus transitioned to the public sector, initially working in Multnomah County's risk management department before becoming the Risk Manager for the City of Salem. In 2022, he shifted to the brokerage side of insurance as a Director of Risk Management, leveraging his extensive experience with complex self-insured programs to address the challenges and opportunities in balancing operations, budgets, and risks.

Marcus is a licensed Property and Casualty insurance agent with several risk management certifications. He has also served as a board member for both the Oregon chapter of RIMS and the Oregon chapter of PRIMA.



Hoan Do, Author, Creating Momentum in Your Life
Session: Keynote - Turning Obstacles into Opportunities

Hoan is an award-winning inspirational speaker, author, and city finalist in NBC's hit show, *American Ninja Warrior*.

From an early age, Hoan was conscious of the sacrifices his parents had made in their escape to the United States during the Vietnam War- in pursuit of the American Dream. Feeling indebted to his parents for their courageous pursuit of a better life, Hoan vowed to ensure that one day, he would be able to take care of his parents. Hoan's hard work took him to Malibu, California, where he attended Pepperdine University, fully engaging in the academic rigor and array of opportunities that the school offered.

With the tremendous pressure Hoan placed on himself, in addition to the stresses of demanding classes, extracurricular responsibilities, and important life decisions, Hoan found himself overwhelmed and battled with suicidal thoughts. His self-esteem reached an all-time low. Refusing to settle and give up on life, Hoan used this experience as a turning point to learn the practical skills necessary to succeed in school and in life.

Hoan's determination and resilience enabled him to secure a position with the world's leading personal development company, surpassing candidates with more experience. As a national speaker and corporate trainer, he has delivered impactful sessions for esteemed organizations.



Emily Courtneage, JD, Director of Purchasing and Contracting, Portland Public Schools (PPS)

Session: Public Procurement: Purchasing and Contracting Basics for Public Entities

Emily has been the Director of the Purchasing & Contracting Department at Portland Public Schools (PPS) for over ten years. She oversees the public procurement processes including Requests for Proposals, contract review and approval, managing purchasing processes including eCommerce and purchase card programs, and oversees district-wide compliance.

Prior to joining PPS, she was an attorney in the Portland area for ten years with a focus on business litigation and contract disputes. She remains an active member of the Oregon State Bar. She is originally from Eugene, Oregon.



Simon Meech, Cyber Practice Leader, BMS Group

Session: Global Cyber Trends

Simon is a seasoned cyber insurance expert with a decade of experience, currently serving as the Cyber Practice Leader at BMS Group. His career includes roles in broking, underwriting, and claims at Beazley and Lockton, providing him with extensive industry knowledge.

Specializing in US public entity business, Simon works to enhance client security and present effective risk profiles to underwriters. Based in London, he collaborates with US retail broker partners to access London and Bermudian markets, offering specialized programs like the BMS Municipal and School Cyber Program, which supports public entities with challenging histories or underwriting concerns.

Simon holds Chartered Insurance Broker status with ACII and CISMP qualifications. His expertise and ongoing commitment to the field have established him as a recognized thought leader in cyber insurance.



Ryan Johnson, Senior Partner, DigiStream Investigations

Session: Intelligence Tradecraft: Principles for Advanced Investigations

Ryan is a Senior Partner at DigiStream Investigations and oversees the Mountain West region from Texas to Alaska. He helps DigiStream's clients use the private intelligence sector's most innovative investigative tools and research to make critical decisions.

We serve business, legal, insurance, and public-sector interests across North America. Ryan has a bachelor's degree in criminology from The University of Minnesota Duluth and is a licensed investigator.



Ross Davies, CPCU, Property Liability Claims Supervisor, City County Insurance Services (CIS)

Session: Claims Panel: Inflationary Trends in the Claims Sector

Ross has been with CIS for three years as a Property Liability Claims Supervisor, handling an inventory of claims involving jail deaths, police use of force, and other public entity claims.

Prior to CIS, Davies was with Farmers Insurance for thirty years and supervised as well as handling complex coverage/injury claims involving litigation in Oregon and California.



Jens Jensen, Director of Claims, Special Districts Association of Oregon
Session: Claims Panel: Inflationary Trends in the Claims Sector

Jens has been with SDAO for 20 years now and currently serves as Director of Claims.



Beth Jones, Attorney, Capitol Legal Services
Session: Houselessness and the Law

Beth is an attorney at Capitol Legal Services in Salem, and primarily represents cities and counties throughout Oregon in civil rights and tort litigation. Prior to law school, Beth served on the Dallas City Council and acquired an appreciation for the challenge's local governments face. Specific to this presentation, Beth is one of the attorneys representing the City of Grants Pass in the widely followed matter of *Blake/Johnson v. Grants Pass*.



Edward K. McDonald III, Ed.D., MBP, BBA (Designations: CRMP, C.M., ACE), J.T. Salem & Associates, LLC.

Session: Keynote: Evolving Effective Enterprise Risk for Public Leadership Decision Making

Edward's distinguished career spans over three decades, combining leadership roles in aviation, aerospace, and military service with extensive experience in Enterprise Risk Management, Finance and Administration, DEIA, and Corporate Strategy.

Academically, Edward holds undergraduate degrees in Business Administration, a Master of Science in Business Psychology, and has pursued Doctoral studies in Organizational Leadership, focusing on decision-making in aviation and aerospace.

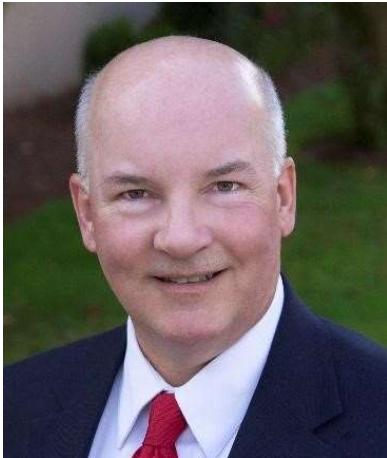
As an entrepreneur, he founded The EM3 Experience™, a global initiative aimed at empowering others, and has developed several influential frameworks, including The Neuroscience of Enterprise Risk Management®.

Edward's remarkable blend of military, academic, and professional achievements underscores his significant industry influence and respected leadership.



Patrick Priest, Executive Director, City County Insurance Services (CIS)
Session: Aid and Assist Panel

Executive Director Patrick Priest came to CIS in 2018 to lead the organization. However, he has worked in public risk pooling since 1998. Prior to CIS, he served as assistant director and long-time chief financial officer at the Colorado Intergovernmental Risk Sharing Agency (CIRSA). He currently serves on the Board of the National League of Cities Mutual Insurance Company and the Oregon Society of CPA's Group Health Trust and is Co-Chair of Oregon's Workers' Compensation Management Labor Advisory Committee. He is a certified public accountant (CPA), holds an associate in risk management for public entities and is a graduate of the University of Colorado. Patrick enjoys exploring Oregon in both his professional and personal travels and wishes he had more time for tennis.



Todd Scharff, Senior Risk Consultant, Oregon Department of Administrative Services Risk Management
Session: Aid and Assist Panel

Todd has been with the Oregon Department of Administrative Services Risk Management program for eleven years, serving as a Senior Risk Consultant for the past seven. His career spans twenty-five years across both self-insured entities and insurance carriers. In his role as Senior Risk Consultant, Todd contributed to a workgroup established under Senate Bill 5506 (2023), collaborating with county governments and community mental health program providers to address insurance barriers and mitigate risks related to Aid and Assist.

Todd holds a B.A. from Linfield University and an Associate in Risk Management designation.



Jessica Pratt, Legislative Affairs Manager, Association of Oregon Counties
Session: Aid and Assist Panel

Jessica is the Legislative Affairs Manager for Health and Human Services at the Association of Oregon Counties, where she advocates for Oregon's county governments in legislative matters. She collaborates with the Governor's office and state agencies to enhance state-county partnerships in behavioral health, public health, and housing and homelessness responses.

Jessica's prior roles include serving as Communications Director for the Foundation for Excellence in Mental Health Care and the Association of Oregon Community Mental Health Programs. Her early career encompasses experience as a Mental Health Associate at the Marion

County Psychiatric Crisis Center, legislative staff at the Oregon State Capitol, and Legislative Liaison at the Oregon Office for Health Policy and Research. Jessica holds a degree from Willamette University.



Cherryl Ramirez, MPH, MPA, Executive Director of the Association of Oregon Community Mental Health Programs (AOCMHP)

Session: Aid and Assist Panel

Cherryl has been the Executive Director of the Association of Oregon Community Mental Health Programs (AOCMHP) for twelve years. AOCMHP represents community mental health programs that provide crucial services for individuals with mental illness, substance use disorders, and developmental disabilities. In her role, Ms. Ramirez advocates for policies and legislation to enhance community behavioral health and developmental disability systems, working closely with behavioral health associations, human service advocacy groups, and other stakeholders.

Ms. Ramirez has also made significant contributions on a national level, serving as president and past president of the National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities Directors (NACBHDD) Board. Before her tenure with AOCMHP, she was the Executive Director of the Association of Community Mental Health Authorities of Illinois for eight years.