

Conference Speakers

Kevin Braun - Montana State Fund

Kevin earned his B.A. in Political Science from Montana State University in 1982, and his J.D. from the University of Montana School of Law in 1992. Upon graduation from law school, Kevin served as a law clerk for the Work Comp Court until June 1993. Kevin then began working at the Department of Labor & Industry and served as chief counsel from 1995 - 2005. In 2005 Kevin began working as a claims attorney at the Montana State Fund and is currently employed as the general counsel for the Montana State Fund.



Steve Carey - Carey Law Firm, PC

Steve grew up in Sidney, Montana. He graduated with a B.A. in Philosophy from the University of Montana and continued at the University of Montana Law School, earning his J.D. in 1984. He has worked as an attorney in the Missoula community for over 39 years. Steve's practice is concentrated in workers' compensation, personal injury actions and insurance coverage issues. He has also served as a mediator in several hundred cases involving all types of litigation. Steve has been a frequent speaker across the state on legal matters. He has also contributed articles to legal publications and conferences. He is a member of the Montana and American Bar Associations, Montana Trial Lawyers Association, and the American Association for Justice. He is a fellow in the College of Workers' Compensation Lawyers.



Dr. Maggie Cook-Shimanek MD, MPH, FACOEM - Department of Labor & Industry

Maggie Cook-Shimanek, MD, MPH, FACOEM is Medical Director for the Montana Department of Labor and Industry Employment Services Division and is the Acting State Medical Officer for the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services.



She is board certified in both Occupational Medicine and General Preventive Medicine and completed her residency training programs at the University of Colorado. She has a Master of Public Health with a concentration in epidemiology from the Colorado School of Public Health. She is a past president of the Rocky Mountain Academy of Occupational and Environmental Medicine and served as an editor of the CO CURE Occupational and Environmental Medicine Opioid Prescribing and Treatment Guidelines. Additionally, she served on the Shoulder Panel for the ACOEM Clinical Practice Guidelines and chairs the External Advisory Panel for the Mountain and Plains Education and Research Center located at the Colorado School of Public Health.

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Becky Curtis - Take Courage Coaching

In the summer of 2005, Becky was involved in a violent rollover car accident in the remote Big Hole Valley of Montana. A C-4 spinal cord injury almost took her life—twice, but she fought to stay alive and rehabilitate from the severe injuries. Months of therapy helped her relearn many of the motor skills she'd lost, until she became somewhat used to her physical limitations.



Then she encountered an even harder challenge: excruciating, burning, aching central nerve pain caused by a cyst on the spinal cord - it was inoperable. She faced a life of never-ending pain—so unbearable she didn't know how I could go on. Referral to a pain clinic gave Becky training in the science of pain, knowledge of the mind-body aspects of pain, and tools to make desired behavioral changes and reach measurable goals. She now had a way to decrease her pain. She continued to research pain and to collaborate with medical specialists, but recognized a piece was missing for most people in pain: ongoing support, learning how to personally manage pain, and motivation to make lasting change. This sparked an idea that soon became her passion: helping others with chronic pain learn effective ways to decrease their pain experience and permanently manage their pain.

Max Hallifrisch - Department of Labor & Industry

Max joined the Montana Department of Labor as a labor mediator in April of 2014. He specializes in Mediations, Facilitations, Interest Based Bargaining (IBB) training, Labor Management Committee (LMC) training, and conducting elections for the public sector. Living in the Great Falls area he has two grown children and has been married for 34 years. He enjoys spending time with his family, fishing and loves to cook.



Wendy Jackson - Department of Labor & Industry

Wendy was born and raised in Fort Wayne, Indiana. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree in History from Indiana University and went on to work several years in Food Science and Food Product Research and Development. In 2016, Wendy and her family relocated to Helena, Montana where she began her career with the State of Montana.



Wendy worked for several years in Worker's Compensation before joining the Department of Labor & Industry as a Mediator, addressing dispute resolution for both Worker's Compensation and Labor Relations issues. Wendy now oversees the Dispute Resolution Section (DRS) with the Department. The DRS consists of six mediators who work to assist employees and employers to

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mediate workers' compensation and labor and collective bargaining issues. In her free time, Wendy enjoys hiking and camping with her husband, two sons, and three springer spaniels. She also enjoys expressing herself artistically through painting, drawing, embroidery, and carving.

Todd Johnson CPCU, WCP - NCCI

As a senior state relations executive, Todd Johnson is responsible for NCCI's regulatory and legislative affairs, including rate filings, legislative pricings, rules and form filings, and residual market issues. He supports the Pacific Northwest states of Alaska, Wyoming, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and the beautiful state of Montana.



Prior to joining NCCI in 2017, Mr. Johnson served as the Director of Workers Compensation for a national TPA specializing in public entities. He was also the Managing Director for all residual market servicing carrier operations with a national WC carrier. Additionally, he led the claim operation for a workers compensation reinsurance company providing oversight of all licensed carriers, public entities, and self-insured companies.

Mr. Johnson received his BA in Law, Criminology and Deviant Behavior from the University of Minnesota. He is a Chartered Property Casualty Underwriter and has over 35 years of workers compensation industry experience.

Vickie Kennedy - Linea Solutions

Vickie Kennedy is the Vice President of Workers' Compensation at Linea Solutions. With decades of experience in workers' compensation, she has partnered with organizational leadership, external stakeholders, and legislators to improve customer outcomes and experiences through the utilization of evidence-based best practices.



She is currently a member of the Study Council for the National Workers' Compensation Benchmark Study as well as faculty for WorkCompCollege.com.

A past member of the Board of Directors for the International Association of Industrial Accident Boards and Commissions (IAIABC), she chairs their Work Disability Prevention and Return to Work Committee.

Vickie has been honored for her contributions to the industry with IAIABC's Frances Perkins Award and WorkCompCentral's Comp Laude Award as an industry leader. She is also a recipient of Washington's Governor's Distinguished Manager Award.

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Debra Livingston - ReEmployAbility, Inc

Debra Livingston has served in various executive capacities throughout her career, with a concentrated focus on return-to-work programs. With over 25 years of workers' compensation experience, she started her career as a claims adjuster before moving into various facets of the industry. Prior to founding ReEmployAbility she was an account executive for Aetna Property Casualty, a broker consultant for Wells Fargo Insurance Services, and claims director for a large Florida employer.



Debra is passionate about getting injured workers back to meaningful work. Through ReEmployAbility, she works with clients to advocate for their employees and to encourage a more empathetic and supportive approach during the return-to-work process. By joining business and community, ReEmployAbility has provided volunteers to thousands of nonprofit organizations across the US who have contributed over 16 million hours of community service!

Debra is a member of Chief Leadership Group, a private network for women in executive leadership, a member of the WorkComp Central Education Advisory Board, and a contributing faculty member of Work Comp College. Debra chairs the executive board of The Spring of Tampa Bay, a nonprofit whose mission is to prevent domestic violence, protect victims, and promote change in lives, families, and communities. She is a Business Insurance Woman to Watch honoree (2017) and has been recognized with a Comp Laude People's Choice Award (2021).

Jennifer McCarthy CP - One Call

Jennifer oversees One Call's prosthetics team and CarePath™ Amputation PathwaySM program. She provides in-depth and non-contentious peer review to ensure optimal and cost-effective treatment with prosthetic devices, supporting individuals with a work-related amputation as they reach their functional goals.



Jennifer has over 20 years of experience in advanced prosthetics fittings and development. She regularly shares her expertise with industry colleagues by developing educational programs for prosthetists, nurses, and case managers.

During her tenure, she has served as a member of the ABC Prosthetics Exam Committee and as an ABC Prosthetics Examiner.

Jennifer is well-versed within the workers' compensation industry, providing reimbursement services to customers, and developing and delivering required documentation for medical justification to payers.

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Billy Parker - KEYNOTE: Lending A Hand, LLC

Billy Parker is a SAFETY ADVOCATE who has a passion for saving limbs and lives. Billy has 20+ years' experience in the welding and fabrication trade. He has participated in and applied OSHA SAFETY STANDARDS from Confined Space to Lockout-Tagout.



Billy is a member of a group called "Moving Forward Limb Loss Support Group" and is a (Certified Peer Visitor) CPV with the Amputee Coalition, bringing together amputees and their care givers. He also volunteers as a personal assistant showing other amputees how to use their new prosthesis and a recipient of a 2018 Comp Laude award for Injured Worker. One day while cleaning out a machine (a drywall shredder) while it was running he was caught and was being pulled into the machine. Now, Billy's mission is to bring SAFETY AWARENESS to the workplace. He wants to share a story about the mistakes made that January morning and how losing his arms has changed the way he lives and feels about life. Through personal stories, humor and real life situations Billy can make sure your employees will remember the "WHY" behind SAFE WORK PROCEDURES.

Richard Piccolotto - KEYNOTE

Chief Richard Picciotto was the FDNY battalion commander in lower Manhattan when it was the target of terrorist attacks on 9/11. The highest-ranking firefighter to survive that day, he humbly reflects on his efforts and offers an insider's knowledge of how courage and training helped save numerous lives. He also chronicles this experience in his best-selling book, "***Last Man Down.***"



Richard recounts his experiences on that day and those following, revealing how he summoned lessons learned throughout his years as an accomplished leader to take on the most difficult tasks. Tactfully incorporating humor with valuable lessons on leadership, preparation and decision-making, Richard puts this defining historical event into perspective, while imparting valuable insights for business leaders to effectively lead teams through significant challenges and in crises.

Jennifer Poole CPM, CIWCS - Idaho Industrial Commission

Jennifer Poole currently works as the mediator for the Idaho Industrial Commission and serves with other mediators across the country as an instructor for the IAIABC/NAWCJ Workers' Compensation Mediators' College. Prior to moving to the Adjudication Department in the Commission, she spent over 15 years in the Commission's Benefits Department as a Program Analyst, a Claims Supervisor, and as one of the instructors for the Certified Idaho Workers Compensation Specialist Program. Jennifer has been an Idaho Certified Professional Mediator since 1996 and currently serves as Vice President on the board of the Idaho Mediation



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Association, is a member of the IMA grants and fundraising committee and the Training and Education Committee. She has been teaching mediation, conflict resolution, constructive communication, and Restorative Justice since 1999 as adjunct faculty at Boise State University and throughout Idaho with her company, Resolution Empowered Mediation and Training. Jennifer holds a Bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice and a Master's degree in Dispute Resolution.

Dr. Kenji Saito MD, JD, FACOEM - MedLawPractice.com

Kenji is the President and Chief Medical and Science Officer of MedLaw LLC where he provides services for companies in varying industries like manufacturing, transportation, finance, paper mills, retail, medical centers, health systems and government agencies. He also serve as the Medical Director for the Maine Board of Licensure in Medicine. He is on medical staff for a local community-based hospital and serves on the boards of American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine (ACOEM) and New England College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine (NECOEM).



Kenji studied Bioethics as an undergraduate at the University of Pennsylvania and was the one of the founders of the Penn Bioethics Society. He went on to pursue a dual degree program in Medicine and Law where he was a co-founder of the Center for Urban Bioethics and Health Law Society. Thereafter, he pursued a transitional internship, a year of Ophthalmology residency and completed my his in Preventive Medicine - Occupational and Environmental Medicine as Chief Resident at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania. Kenji is also barred to practice Law in Pennsylvania and a former real estate salesperson.

Dr. Gerry Stanley MD - Harvard MedTech

Gerry Stanley, M.D. is the Senior Vice President and Chief Medical Officer for Harvard MedTech. He has a deep expertise in population health management, self-insured health plan management, medical consumerism and direct-to-employer network enablement. Most recently, Dr. Stanley served as the Chief Medical Officer for the Employer and Consumer division of Cerner. Dr. Stanley received his undergraduate degree from Creighton University studying Classical and Near Eastern Civilizations where he graduated magna cum laude.



He then attended the Creighton University School of Medicine where he served as class president for 3 years, graduating with clinical honors and receiving the university's highest honor, the Spirit of Creighton Award. Upon graduation he completed his residency at the Northern Colorado Family Medicine Program with a focus on rural and surgical family medicine. He practiced medicine for over 10 years in a variety of practice settings and group/hospital leadership positions before attending the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University and graduated from the Physician CEO program.

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Amy Todd MS, OTR/L, CHT - Hanger Clinic

Amy Todd holds a master's degree in Occupational Therapy from Brenau University, and has been practicing as an OT and Certified Hand Therapist for 15 years. She currently works as part of the Upper Limb Program with Hanger Clinic as a Clinical Therapy Specialist, focusing on upper limb prosthetics rehabilitation and education. Amy enjoys working in several areas, but is primarily focused on the specialty services of hand therapy and rehabilitation of patients with amputations and prosthetics.



Her extensive training and experience allows her to treat any dysfunction of the arm, from shoulder to fingertips, and helping patients return to independence and participation in all areas of their lives. Amy presents at the local, national, and international levels on hand therapy and prosthetic rehabilitation, including speaking at universities, national/international conferences, and in Mexico, Thailand, and South Africa.

To achieve the best outcomes, Amy believes that a team approach with patient care is critical. Function and participation are the core of our beings and it is our duty to facilitate these in our patients.

Steve Wurzelbacher Phd, CPE, ARM - Center for Workers' Compensation Studies

Steve Wurzelbacher is the Manager of the CWCS at the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). In this role, he coordinates workers' compensation claim analyses, exposure assessment research, safety/health intervention effectiveness studies, and health services research with public and private sector partners. Steve has worked in the safety and health field since 1998, as both a researcher at NIOSH and as a risk control practitioner for a workers' compensation insurer. Steve earned a PhD in Occupational Safety and Ergonomics from the University of Cincinnati, a BS in Chemical Science from Xavier University, is a Certified Professional Ergonomist (CPE), and holds the Associate in Risk Management (ARM) designation.

