

TENNESSEE WORKERS' COMPENSATION  
EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCE 2024

**More Than  Recovery**

THE FUTURE OF WORKFORCE WELLNESS

## Wednesday, June 12

### *Welcoming Comments and Bureau Updates*

MIRABELLA F-J @ 1:00 – 1:30 PM | GENERAL SESSION

**Presentation of Colors:** Tennessee State Parks Honor Guard

**Pledge of Allegiance:** Ray Loveless, Workers' Compensation Specialist, Coverage Unit,  
Bureau of Workers' Compensation

**National Anthem:** Rhoberta Orsland, LaShawn Pender, Kyle Jones

**Invocation:** Marilyn Vaughn

**Welcome:** Troy Haley, Administrator, Bureau of Workers' Compensation  
Deniece Thomas, Commissioner, Department of Labor & Workforce Development  
Jeff Francis, Assistant Administrator, Bureau of Workers' Compensation

This session will serve to welcome all attendees, discuss recent developments within the Bureau and lay the groundwork for the three-day conference by introducing the issues and outlining the topics to be discussed in the days that follow. The Commissioner of the Department of Labor and Workforce Development will offer an update on the activities and future direction of the Department. The Administrator of the Bureau will offer a similar update on the issues he sees confronting the industry in the future.

### *From the Front Lines: The Realities of Claims Management Today*

MIRABELLA F-J @ 1:30 – 2:30 PM | GENERAL SESSION

**Introduction:** Jeff Francis, Assistant Administrator, Bureau of Workers' Compensation

**Presenters:** Bob Wilson, President, WorkCompCollege.com  
Erik Pimentel, Territory Manager/Patient Advocate, Shamrock Prosthetics, Inc.  
Ashley Roberts, Claims Manager, Cannon Cochran Management Services Inc. (CCMSI)

The impact that claims professionals have on injured people's lives can be enormous, and when things are done correctly, great outcomes can occur. But we never talk about that, do we? In this session, an injured worker who has been through the workers' compensation process and a seasoned claims professional will talk about their experiences and the critical nature of claims management today. They will discuss the positive impact claims professionals can have, and what can happen when things go off track. Ideas and solutions for industry limitations will be discussed, and attendees will be encouraged to "think outside the box" to create the best possible outcomes for all involved.

## *Networking Break*

EXHIBITION HALL 2:30 – 3:00 PM

Enjoy a snack while you network with your colleagues and visit the booths in Exhibition Hall.

## *Legislative Update*

MIRABELLA F-J @ 3:00 – 3:15 PM | GENERAL SESSION

**Introduction:** **Claudia Byers**, Director, Compliance Program, Bureau of Workers' Compensation

**Presenter:** **Amanda Terry**, Director of Legal Services, Legislative Liaison, Bureau of Workers' Compensation

In this presentation, the Bureau's Legislative Liaison will present all legislative changes related to workers' compensation that were made during the most recent session, provide the dates of implementation, and explain their impact on the current system. Changes include new requirements regarding filing First Reports of Injury, the Notice of Controversy and a requirement for self-insureds relative to an increase to their insurance company's cash reserves. She will also discuss the latest updates to Rules concerning the Medical Fee Schedule, Medical Impairment Rating (MIR) Registry, the Firefighter PTSD Grant Program and others.

## *Case Law Update*

MIRABELLA F-J @ 3:15 – 4:30 PM | GENERAL SESSION

**Introduction:** **April Verdoni**,

**Presenter:** **Fred Baker**, Attorney, Wimberly, Lawson, Wright, Daves, & Jones

In 2013, Tennessee's workers' compensation law underwent fundamental reforms. As a result of those reforms, workers' compensation cases are now initially decided by the Court of Workers' Compensation Claims, and those decisions are appealed to the Workers' Compensation Appeals Board. In this session, attendees will learn about significant cases that have been decided in the last twelve months pursuant to the 2013 reforms, including how those cases may have changed the

interpretation and application of the law, and will gain insight into what the participants in the workers' compensation system may expect as we move into the future.

## *Adjourn*

4:15 PM

## *Welcome Reception*

EXHIBITION HALL @ 4:30 PM

Please join us for an opportunity to visit with old friends, make new ones, and meet and interact with Conference Exhibitors to learn about the goods and services they offer all while enjoying some tasty hors d'oeuvres and a beverage.

# Thursday, June 13

## *Oral Arguments before the Workers' Compensation Appeals Board: Theralease Ridley v. Mature Care of Standifer Place, LLC, et al.*

MIRABELLA F-J @ 8:00 – 9:00 AM | GENERAL SESSION

**Introduction:** **Elizabeth Vines**, Staff Attorney, Workers' Compensation Appeals Board

**Call to Order:** **Matthew Keene**, Acting Deputy Clerk, Workers' Compensation Appeals Board

**Judicial Panel:** **Timothy W. Conner**, Presiding Judge, Workers' Compensation Appeals Board  
**Pele L. Godkin**, Judge, Workers' Compensation Appeals Board  
**Meredith B. Weaver**, Judge, Workers' Compensation Appeals Board

**Representing the Appellant:** **Connor R. Sestak, Partner, Morgan, Akins & Jackson**

**Representing the Appellee:** **Michael A. Wagner, Partner, Wagner & Wagner**

In this session, the Tennessee Workers' Compensation Appeals Board, which hears appeals from orders issued by the Court of Workers' Compensation Claims, will conduct an actual oral argument in the matter of Theralease Ridley v. mature Care of Standifer Place, LLC, et al.

Conference attendees will be able to attend and observe attorneys presenting their legal arguments to the Board and will see the interactions between the judges and the attorneys, including questions presented to the attorneys by the judges.

In *Ridley v. Mature Care of Standifer Place*, the Appeals Board will be asked to address issues concerning the presumption of correctness afforded to the causation opinion of an authorized treating physician and the aggravation of a pre-existing condition. Ms. Ridley was working as a certified nursing assistant when she reported back pain related to her duties in patient care. Objective testing revealed degenerative conditions in Ms. Ridley's back, and the authorized physician ultimately opined that Ms. Ridley's condition did not arise primarily out of her employment. Ms. Ridley sought a different physician's opinion on her own, and that physician opined that her condition is causally related to her employment. Ms. Ridley, in the meantime, moved, and she requested a new panel of physicians in her new locality. The employer denied that request on the basis that her complaints and need for treatment are not causally related to her employment. The Court of Workers' Compensation Claims concluded that Ms. Ridley's physician's opinion rebutted the presumption of correctness afforded to the causation opinion of the authorized treating physician and ordered the employer to provide a panel of physicians in Ms. Ridley's new location. *Mature Care of Standifer Place* appealed, raising as issues whether the trial court erred in finding Ms. Ridley's complaints and need for medical treatment to be primarily caused by the work incident, whether Ms. Ridley suffered a compensable aggravation of a pre-existing condition, whether she is entitled to a new panel of physicians, and whether the authorized physician's opinion was rebutted.

## *Networking Break*

EXHIBITION HALL 9:00 – 9:30 AM

Enjoy a snack while you network with your colleagues and visit the booths in Exhibition Hall.

## **Keynote Session:**

### *Navigating Challenging Conversations: The Pushback, Lack of Understanding and Defensiveness*

MIRABELLA F-J @ 9:30 – 10:30 AM | KEYNOTE SESSION

**Introduction:** **Matthew Salyer**, Program Coordinator, Information Services, Bureau of Workers' Compensation

**Presenter:** **Hilary Blair, MFA, CSP**, CEO and Co-Owner ARTiculate: Real & Clear

Navigating challenging conversations can be a daunting task, but it doesn't have to leave you feeling defeated or discouraged. In fact, with the right tools and a strategic mindset, these conversations can become opportunities for growth, understanding and resolution.

Key learning Objectives:

1. Move toward resolution without heightened conflict.
2. Communicate successfully with differing perspectives.
3. Activate Relationship vs. siloing in conversation.

Instead of shying away, you can consider challenging conversations as avenues for constructive change. We want to foster understanding, explore solutions and ultimately find common ground or resolution. It can transform confrontations into opportunities for productive dialogue and mutual success. The group will practice tools and techniques that support their client and employee interactions.

## *Worker Memorial*

MIRABELLA F-J @ 10:30 – 10:45 AM | GENERAL SESSION

**Introduction: Susie Morgan**, Administrative Assistant 3, Bureau of Workers' Compensation

On April 28, 1970, Congress passed the Occupational Safety and Health Act which established OSHA. It was signed into law by President Richard Nixon on December 29, 1970, promising workers the right to a safe and healthful workplace. In the 47 years since, workplaces have evolved, and more jobs fall outside the traditional nine to five timeslots. And fatality rates have fallen. It is estimated by the USDOL that some 14,000 workers were killed on the job in 1970. That number fell to 4,340 in 2009 even though the nation's workforce doubled. However, workplace hazards remain, and fatalities still occur.

This session will raise awareness about the need to strengthen our commitment to make jobs safer and will honor those Tennessee workers killed at work from May 1, 2023, through April 30, 2024. Other sessions in the conference will highlight the preventable nature of most workplace accidents and illnesses.

## *Networking Break*

EXHIBITION HALL 10:45 – 11:15 AM

Enjoy a snack while you network with your colleagues and visit the booths in Exhibition Hall.

## **Keynote Session:**

### *TRAUMA—Is it Possible to Unlock the Power of the Brain with Virtual Reality?*

MIRABELLA F-J @ 11:15 – 12:15 PM | KEYNOTE SESSION

**Introduction: Tim Kellum**, Associate Counsel, Subsequent Injury Fund, Bureau of Workers' Compensation

**Presenter: Gerry Stanley, M.D., P-CEO** Harvard MedTech

The notion that virtual reality can be used to unlock and retrain the brain seems like science fiction, but the future has arrived. The Chief Medical Officer of the nation's leading digital therapeutics company will discuss this concept and explain how virtual reality unlocks the healing potential of the human brain and how we see this science played out in our daily lives. Dr. Stanley will focus on how

injured workers experience trauma and how the healing potential of virtual reality allows the entire care team to active a bio-psycho-social model of healthcare delivery. Attendees will enjoy this high energy and fun presentation and leave with powerful insights into the world around them and how to apply the science of the future – today.

Course Objectives:

- Understand the difference between virtual reality (VR) and virtual reality therapy (Vx).
- Understand the symptoms of trauma and how injured workers present with them.
- Understand what neuroplasticity is and how it can heal injured workers.

## *Lunch (Provided)*

12:30 – 1:45 PM @ OAKLEIGH BALLROOM OR GATEWAY GRILLE (HOTEL RESTAURANT)

The Sue Ann Head Award winner will be announced in the Oakleigh Ballroom location during lunch. Or, if you prefer talking with friends or catching up on emails, the same buffet will also be available to enjoy in the Gateway Grille.

## **Keynote Session:**

### *AI, ML, Generative AI, Predictive Analytics: What are they and how can they help?*

MIRABELLA F-J @ 1:30 – 2:30 PM | KEYNOTE SESSION

**Introduction:** Kyle Jones, Communications Coordinator, Bureau of Workers' Compensation

**Presenter:** Kimberly A. Wiswell, CMSP-Fellow, Director, Client Services, Embedded Analytics, Gradient AI

Artificial intelligence, or AI, is designed to assist with decision-making when the variables involved exceed the abilities of human comprehension. Essentially, this is accomplished by recognizing patterns in the underlying data. Join us as we delve into the world of artificial intelligence, machine learning (ML), predictive analytics, and generative AI, with an emphasis on how analytics can assist all parties involved in the workers' compensation claims process, including claims adjusters, attorneys, nurse case managers, risk managers and more.

We'll discuss the benefits of knowing which claims are likely to be high cost and need special handling, which are likely to have a surgery or other major procedure in their future, which are likely to be litigated, discernible treatment patterns, and which may need other services to achieve the best outcome. More importantly, we'll talk about what to do with this knowledge, including operationalizing actions to deal with these findings.

Finally, and key to success in this area, we'll talk about the data sources needed to drive your AI/ML solutions, where they might be obtained, how the accuracy and completeness of the data impacts the analytics, and the value of using data from other payers and third-party sources.

## Takeaways:

- Understanding of the basics of AI/ML and the role of artificial intelligence and predictive analytics in workers' compensation.
- Understanding the data needed to drive AI to achieve reliable outcomes.
- Understanding the best ways to operationalize AI findings to benefit from these solutions.
- Understanding the current generative AI wave and what it can and cannot reliably do for you.

## Networking Break

EXHIBITION HALL 2:30 – 3:00 PM

Enjoy a snack while you network with your colleagues and visit the booths in Exhibition Hall.

### BREAKOUT SESSION

SUGGESTED AUDIENCE: ATTORNEYS, MEDIATORS, ADJUSTERS

## *From the Board of Professional Responsibility: Current Developments and Succession Planning*

MIRABELLA F @ 3:00 – 4:00 PM

**Introduction:** **Hon. Brian Addington**, Judge, Court of Workers' Compensation Claims

**Presenter:** **Sandy Garrett**, Chief Disciplinary Counsel, Board of Professional Responsibility, Supreme Court of Tennessee

This session is a two-part presentation. *Current Developments* reviews the disciplinary and ethical accomplishments of the Board over the last fiscal year as well as providing updates on newly issued Formal Ethics Opinions and recent Tennessee Supreme Court decisions. *Succession Planning* is an in depth look at planning ahead for retirement and the steps that should be taken for a smooth transition. Further guidance is offered to have a plan in place in case of disaster, disability, and death.

Download Slides

### BREAKOUT SESSION

SUGGESTED AUDIENCE: EMPLOYERS, CASE MANAGERS, ADJUSTERS

## *And Now Let's Connect: Tools to Click Not Clash*

MIRABELLA G-J @ 3:00 – 4:00 PM

**Introduction:** **Cheryl Ploeger**, Mediation Specialist, Bureau of Workers' Compensation

**Presenter:** **Hilary Blair, MFA, CSP**, CEO and Co-Owner ARTiculate: Real & Clear

Our intrinsic wiring pulls us towards connection, irrespective of our differences. Yet, societal norms often drive wedges based on those same attributes. Building on the keynote, Hilary demonstrates

how we can harness our diverse strengths, elevate self-awareness, and diminish self-conscious barriers. Practice her 'Activating Presence' approach, coupled with the transformative 'BASA' conversation technique, to illuminate a path to genuine relationships while valuing individual uniqueness.

**Learning Objectives:**

1. Create connections that matter so that you build powerful client relationships.
2. Embrace the power of embodied communication so that you build trust.
3. Own the awkward for relationship success.

**BREAKOUT SESSION**

SUGGESTED AUDIENCE: CASE MANAGERS, EMPLOYERS, PHYSICIANS

*I'm Not Biased*

OAKLEIGH @ 3:00 – 4:00 PM

**Introduction:** **Brittany Garcia**, Compliance Specialist 1, Bureau of Workers' Compensation

**Presenter:** **Anastasia Settle, R.N., C.C.M.**, Case Management Liaison, Carlisle Medical

This is a one-hour Ethics session focusing on ethical behavior and bias. In an amusing way, it teases out the most frequent kinds of bias, discusses why we have bias, and teaches the participant to recognize and respond to both internal and external bias. This session aims to address how Case Managers and Adjusters can increase their ability to:

- Respect the rights and inherent dignity of their clients,
- Maintain objectivity in their relationships with clients, and
- Act with integrity and fidelity with clients and others.

**Learning Objectives:**

Attendees will be able to:

- 1) Identify how and why bias exists.
- 2) Understand the most common types of bias.
- 3) Gain guidance on how to evaluate and assess their own biases.

Take-aways from this course include tools on how to improve objectivity.

*Adjourn*

4:30 PM

# Friday, June 14



## BREAKOUT SESSION

SUGGESTED AUDIENCE: ATTORNEYS, MEDIATORS, ADJUSTERS

### *Handling Claims with Self-Represented Claimants*

MIRABELLA F @ 8:00 – 9:00 AM

**Introduction:** **James “Jay” Hicks**, Assistant Counsel, Ombudsman Attorney, Bureau of Workers’ Compensation

**Presenter:** **James V. Thompson, Rainey**, Member, Kizer, Reviere & Bell, PLC

Successful handling of claims with self-represented (unrepresented or “pro se”) claimants is the goal of all interested parties in the workers’ compensation system. We strive to ensure that all parties are treated fairly and that the law is upheld in letter and in spirit. However, particular challenges in working with self-represented claimants can and often arise for the courts, mediators and Bureau staff, claims representatives, and defense counsel. Providing contact information and general claim notices are a starting point, but deeper conversations on the medical treatment process, disability benefits calculations, and the potential impact on the claimant’s future employment can soon arise—and that’s assuming no disputed issue (e.g., causation, impairment, treatment approvals) are triggered. Communications logistics and a lack of relationship between the claimant and the other involved players can also compound problems.

The objectives of this presentation are:

- To review the rules, regulations and other points of law on required communications with self-represented claimants.
- Address roadblocks to successful claim resolution due to the claimant’s self-represented status; and
- Discuss practical solutions for claims representatives, counsel, mediators, and the Court to explain and work through the claims process under relevant workers’ compensation law.

This presentation will address:

- Rules on required and prohibited communications for claims representatives and counsel to self-represented claimants.
- Questions on explaining the law and claims process, versus offering legal advice, through various stages of the claim process.
- The Bureau mediator’s role in engaging the parties to assist in gathering information, understanding the disputed issues, and evaluating the claim overall.
- The Workers’ Compensation Court’s role in hearing and responding to presentations from self-represented claimants.
- Practical discussions on communication logistics with self-represented claimants; and
- Engaging assistance from other resources (local employer contacts, ombudsman’s office, etc.).

[Download Slides](#)

## BREAKOUT SESSION

SUGGESTED AUDIENCE: EMPLOYERS, CASE MANAGERS, ADJUSTERS

## *Empathy, Encouragement & Empowerment*

MIRABELLA G-J @ 8:00 - 9:00 AM

**Introduction: TBD**

**Presenter: Keven Wilberding**, Vice President, Ambassador Service Group

Session attendees will have the opportunity to delve into the crucial aspects of empathy, encouragement, and empowerment in the realm of managing workers' compensation claims. The presentation will illuminate the fine line between empathy and sympathy, allowing participants to grasp the nuanced differences and understand the significance and value of genuine empathy in the workplace. Through interactive discussions, attendees will explore the imperative of displaying empathy in the context of workers' compensation claims, recognizing its pivotal role in fostering trust, communication, and ultimately, successful outcomes.

Moreover, the session will shed light on the potential challenges associated with excessive empathy, equipping attendees with strategies to navigate these obstacles effectively. By addressing common pitfalls and offering practical solutions, participants will gain insights into striking the delicate balance between empathy and professionalism. Additionally, the presentation will emphasize how empathy, when coupled with encouragement and empowerment, can serve as powerful catalysts for success in handling workers' compensation claims. By harnessing these tools, attendees will be empowered to cultivate supportive environments, facilitate collaboration, and ultimately drive positive change within their organizations, leading to more efficient and compassionate management of workers' compensation cases.

### **BREAKOUT SESSION**

**SUGGESTED AUDIENCE: EMPLOYERS, CASE MANAGERS, ADJUSTERS**

## *Workers' Comp 101*

CAMBRIDGE AB @ 9:15 - 10:15 AM

**Introduction: Jamie Ballou**, eLearning Coordinator, Bureau of Workers' Compensation

**Presenter: Jeff Francis**, Assistant Administrator, Bureau of Workers' Compensation

**Hon. Pamela Johnson**, Judge, Court of Workers' Compensation Claims

**Hon. Josh Baker**, Judge, Court of Workers' Compensation Claims

What do you think immediately comes to mind for most when they hear the words "workers' compensation"? It's "compensation" right? Because that means money. What if workers' compensation had been known as "workers' recovery" from the beginning? How would expectations have changed? How might outcomes have changed?

It isn't too late. You can have a culture of recovery rather than a culture of compensation at your worksite by following a few simple steps that will be discussed in this presentation.

Attendees at this presentation should expect to learn:

- Ways to improve the workplace culture, reduce or eliminate workplace injuries and save money.
- Ways to turn a workers' compensation claim into a workers' recovery plan.

- Ways that employers may be negatively influencing their workplace culture regarding workplace injuries.
- The impact that a workplace culture has on the cost and length of recovery in workplace injuries.
- The major statutory requirements of the current Tennessee workers' compensation laws that are important for all stakeholders to know.
- The Bureau Rules that help create a positive workplace culture that include:
  - How long employees have to report an injury.
  - When and how to put together a panel of physicians.
  - When should employers report a claim to their insurance carrier.

## **BREAKOUT SESSION**

**SUGGESTED AUDIENCE: EMPLOYERS, CASE MANAGERS, ADJUSTERS, MEDICAL SERVICE PROVIDERS**

### *Exploring Alternative Treatments in Workers' Comp Injuries—A Focus on Dry Needling and Therapy Dogs*

**OAKLEIGH @ 8:00 – 9:00 AM**

**Introduction: Dr. Jeffrey Hazlewood**, Board Certified in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, subspecialty Board Certification in Pain Medicine

**Presenter:** [Jason Barclay, PT, CSCS, COMPT, CIDN, Astym-Cert](#), Regional Director, STAR  
Physical Therapy  
George and Tammy Kilgore, Kilgore Family Trainers  
Judy, Certified Therapy Dog

In this presentation, we will explore two unconventional yet effective methods: dry needling and the utilization of therapy dogs.

Dry needling, a western form of acupuncture approved by ODG in certain conditions and a technique gaining popularity in the realm of physical therapy, involves the insertion of thin needles into specific trigger points in muscles, tendons, ligaments, or near nerves to alleviate pain and improve musculoskeletal function. This session will provide insights into the principles behind dry needling, its application in treating work-related injuries, and its potential benefits for injured workers in the context of workers' compensation claims.

Additionally, we will “shed” light on the therapeutic benefits of incorporating specially trained therapy dogs into the rehabilitation process of injured workers. These furry companions offer emotional support, reduce stress and anxiety, and promote physical activity, all of which are crucial elements in the recovery journey of individuals navigating workplace injuries.

Attendees can expect to gain a comprehensive understanding of these alternative treatments, including their efficacy, safety considerations, regulatory landscape, and practical implementation within the framework of workers' compensation claims. Furthermore, we will discuss strategies for integrating these modalities into existing rehabilitation programs, fostering collaboration between healthcare providers, employers, and insurers to optimize outcomes for injured workers.

Whether you're a claims adjuster, healthcare provider, employer representative, or legal professional involved in workers' compensation, this session offers invaluable insights into innovative approaches that have the potential to transform the landscape of injury rehabilitation and support within the workplace. Join us as we explore the intersection of alternative therapies and workers' compensation, paving the way for improved outcomes and enhanced quality of life for injured workers.

[Download Slides](#)

## *Networking Break*

EXHIBITION HALL 9:00 – 9:15 AM

Enjoy a snack while you network with your colleagues and visit the booths in Exhibition Hall.

BREAKOUT SESSION | SUGGESTED AUDIENCE: ATTORNEYS, MEDIATORS

## *Professionalism in the Courts*

MIRABELLA F @ 9:15 – 10:15 AM

**Introduction:** **Hon. Timothy W. Conner**, Presiding Judge, Bureau of Workers' Compensation  
**Presenter:** [Hon. Dwight Tarwater](#), Justice, Tennessee Supreme Court

Join Tennessee Supreme Court Justice Dwight Tarwater for an enlightening session where legal professionals will delve into the intricacies of professional obligations in the field. With Justice Tarwater's extensive expertise and esteemed reputation in the legal arena, attendees can expect a comprehensive exploration of the ethical responsibilities inherent to both lawyers and judges operating within the realm of workers' compensation law.

Throughout the session, Justice Tarwater will navigate attendees through nuanced scenarios and case studies, shedding light on the ethical dilemmas often encountered in practice. From conflicts of interest to impartiality in decision-making, participants will gain invaluable insights into navigating the ethical landscape of workers' compensation litigation. By examining real-world examples and drawing upon Justice Tarwater's wealth of experience on the bench, attendees will leave equipped with a deeper understanding of their professional obligations and ethical duties, ensuring they uphold the highest standards of integrity and professionalism in their legal practice.

This session promises to be an essential cornerstone for legal professionals enhancing their ethical framework in the field of workers' compensation law.

[Download Slides](#)

## **BREAKOUT SESSION**

SUGGESTED AUDIENCE: EMPLOYERS, CASE MANAGERS, ADJUSTERS, MEDICAL SERVICE PROVIDERS

### *Work Conditioning: Proper Orders and Realistic Expectations*

MIRABELLA G-J @ 9:15 – 10:15 AM

**Introduction:** Marion White, NextStep Program, Bureau of Workers' Compensation

**Presenter:** Dan Headrick, PT, CEAS III, CETS, Astym, MA, Star Physical Therapy

This presentation, delivered by a seasoned physical therapist, promises to be an enlightening and practical session for professionals seeking to deepen their understanding of rehabilitation within the context of occupational injuries. The session aims to explore the pivotal role of work conditioning programs in facilitating the safe and efficient return of injured workers to their pre-injury employment status.

Attendees can anticipate an in-depth examination of the core principles and methodologies underpinning work conditioning interventions. The presenter will delve into the assessment criteria used to identify candidates for such programs, emphasizing the importance of a comprehensive evaluation encompassing functional capacity, job demands, and individualized rehabilitation goals. Attendees will gain insights into the design and implementation of work conditioning protocols tailored to address specific job-related tasks and ergonomic considerations.

Moreover, the presentation will underscore the interdisciplinary nature of work conditioning, highlighting the collaborative efforts between physical therapists, occupational therapists, physicians, and employers in optimizing outcomes for injured workers.

Learning Objectives:

- Identifying proper orders for Work Conditioning
- Listing at least three benefits of a work conditioning program
- Citing the differences between work conditioning and work hardening
- Identifying realistic expectations of Work Conditioning

Ultimately, participants will leave the session equipped with practical strategies and evidence-based approaches to enhance their practice and promote the holistic rehabilitation of injured workers, thereby fostering improved functional outcomes and mitigating long-term disability risks.

## **BREAKOUT SESSION**

SUGGESTED AUDIENCE: EMPLOYERS, CASE MANAGERS, MEDICAL SERVICE PROVIDERS

### *Closing the Communication Gap: What Case Managers, Employers and Medical Providers Need to Know*

OAKLEIGH @ 9:15 – 10:15 AM

**Introduction:** Missi Norris, Compliance Specialist 2, Bureau of Workers' Compensation

**Presenters:** Laura Roberts, RN, CCM, Case Management Manager, CorVel

**Dr. Robert B. Snyder, M.D.**, Medical Director, Bureau of Workers' Compensation  
**Jay Blaisdell**, Program Coordinator, Medical Impairment Rating (MIR) Registry and Certified Physician Program, Bureau of Workers' Compensation

What's even better than finding a physician who accepts workers' compensation patients? How about a physician who also knows how to get patients back to work? Learn about the Bureau's newest program: the Certified Physician Program.

Case Managers are an integral part of the return-to-work process. How can employers facilitate a successful RTW plan? What tools are available? What are the missed opportunities? Come join the discussion to learn how Case Managers are leading the way to successful return to work.

Finally, hear how the latest updates on the Tennessee medical fee schedule affect you.

## **BREAKOUT SESSION**

**SUGGESTED AUDIENCE: ADJUSTERS, CASE MANAGERS, EMPLOYERS**

### *Ethics—A Moral Imperative*

**CAMBRIDGE AB @ 9:15 - 10:15 AM**

**Introduction:** **Amy Harmon**, Mediation Specialist, Bureau of Workers' Compensation

**Presenter:** **Patsy Nickle**, V.P. of Education & Business Resource Development, Safehaven

This presentation will show what a tightrope case managers and adjusters walk when trying to decide the best treatment for a patient and still seeing the cost saving side of companies who must pay for the treatment. Case Managers must use the guidelines of the *Universal Ethical Principles* and those guiding the practice of Case Management when making these decisions. The speaker will explain those principles in detail.

For the adjusters who pay those requests, it will help them explain why the case manager is asking for a treatment and what cost benefit it will be. Then the discussion will delve into the side of the payor source, the insurance company, their outlook on the treatment plan.

A large part of the presentation will deal with how Case Managers should treat, speak to, or introduce themselves when first assigned the case. It also gives information as to what the patient may be feeling and if they trust the Case Manager or the adjuster. It makes a huge difference when the tone is well set.

Learning Objectives:

- Define common terms used in workers' comp, and how they relate to patient advocacy.
- Discuss the importance of trust.
- Discuss the balancing act of appropriate treatment and cost savings issues.
- Discuss the conflicts of personal values and business values.

## Networking Break

EXHIBITION HALL 10:15 – 10:30 AM

Enjoy a snack while you network with your colleagues and visit the booths in Exhibition Hall.

## TODAY in Tennessee—The Workers' Compensation Review, Part 3

MIRABELLA F @ 10:30 – 12:00 PM | GENERAL SESSION

**Introduction:** **Sandra Haynes**, Mediation Specialist, Bureau of Workers' Compensation

**Presenters:** **Sarah Hardison** Reisner, Principal, Manier & Herod

**Julie Reasonover**, Founder, Reasonover Law Firm

**David Deming**, Principal, Manier & Herod

**David Drobny**, Principal, Manier & Herod

**Jonathan May**, Attorney, Morgan & Morgan

The “band” is getting back together, although with a couple of new bandmembers! This presentation will have a “talk show” format and feel and will include an esteemed panel of attorneys representing the Defense side/perspective and the Plaintiff’s side/perspective. The goal of the presentation is to walk the attendees through the life of a Workers' Compensation Claim from the very beginning of the claim with the focus on moving the claim forward towards a reasonable and final conclusion in a timely fashion, but we plan to take a deeper dive this year into some complicated issues such as “Work from Home”, “Death Claims”, and other advanced topics. Topics to be discussed will include:

- Beginning of the claim, Recorded statement, documents to be sent to the injured worker
- Claims investigations and decisions on compensability
- Work from Home questions on compensability
- Panel requirements and the Telehealth option
- Denial of claims, filing Notice of Denial, C23 Form
- Wage statement and average weekly wage calculations- when are weeks included? What constitutes earnings?
- TTD/TPD benefits
- The Ombudsman Program
- Settlement of Initial Benefits
- Enhanced Benefits – how do we calculate?
- Penalties
- Why would an Employer be referred for penalties?
  - When would Plaintiff’s counsel be referred for penalties?
  - What are grounds for referral?
  - Who decides if penalties are appropriate?
  - What is the dollar range of penalties assessed?
- Death Benefits
- What do you do when claims are reassigned?
- How to avoid a Workers' Compensation Claim turning into an EEOC charge and/or protracted Employment litigation

## *Closing Comments*

MIRABELLA F @ 12:00 PM | GENERAL SESSION

**Troy Haley**, Administrator, Tennessee Bureau of Workers' Compensation



# TENNESSEE WORKERS' COMPENSATION EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCE 2024

## More Than Recovery

THE FUTURE OF WORKFORCE WELLNESS

### Presenter Biographies



#### Fred Baker

ATTORNEY AT WIMBERLY LAWSON WRIGHT DAVES & JONES, PLLC

FREDRICK R. BAKER is a Member in the Cookeville, Tennessee, office of Wimberly Lawson Wright Daves & Jones, PLLC, which he joined in 2001. His law practice includes an emphasis in workers' compensation and employment discrimination, as well as ADA and FMLA compliance. Fred is the Editor of the *Tennessee Workers' Compensation Handbook*, published by M. Lee Smith Publishers. He is also Legislative Co-Chair of the Upper Cumberland Society of Human Resource Management and is Tennessee's representative for the National Workers' Compensation Defense Network. Fred has an AV Preeminent® Rating - which is the highest possible rating given by Martindale-Hubbell, the leading independent attorney rating entity. He is also listed in The Best Lawyers in America® in the field of Workers' Compensation Law/Employers, was named 2022 LAWYER OF THE YEAR by *Best Lawyers* for Workers' Compensation Law/Employers (Nashville Region) and is listed in *Mid-South Super Lawyers®* in the area of Workers' Compensation. He received his Bachelor of Arts degree in Philosophy, *summa cum laude*, from Transylvania University and his law degree, *magna cum laude*, from the University of Tennessee.

#### Jason Barclay, PT, CSCS, COMPT, CIDN, Astym-Cert

REGIONAL DIRECTOR AT STAR PHYSICAL THERAPY

Jason has been practicing as a Physical Therapist since 2008. He graduated from University of Missouri – Columbia with master's degree in physical therapy. He played soccer in college for University of Missouri – St. Louis as an under grad. Jason is married with three children and lives in Thompson's Station, Tennessee.



## Hilary Blair, MFA, CEO, CSP

TEAM AND LEADERSHIP ACTIVATOR AT ARTICULATE REAL + CLEAR

As an actor, teacher, and voice performer, Hilary Blair approaches communication from a different perspective than many businesspeople would think to consider.

She is impassioned by moving beyond habits and learned behaviors to uncover what is unique and authentic in individuals and groups. She knows from experience that behind fine communication lies good technique. She understands the importance of tapping into each speaker's unique story, style, and inherent ability to connect with an audience. She appreciates how aligning one's breath, voice, body, and message can put the audience in the palm of your hand— be they seated across the table or gazing out of a small rectangle in a laptop's glass wall.

Hilary is co-founder and CEO of ARTiculate: Real & Clear, a senior executive training firm that helps excellent clients become more extraordinary. A presentation and speaking voice expert, Hilary is a highly regarded coach and facilitator working extensively across the globe with a variety of businesses including American Express, Maersk, Genentech, Liberty Global, Slalom, Merrill Lynch, and Hunter Douglas.

She helps clients know what is going on “under the hood” physiologically and encourages them to honor their breath to release their power. Upon this foundation of breath, science, and human connection, Hilary builds interactive executive sessions aimed at understanding and shaping executive presence, improving public speaking and presentation skills, and being an authentic leader who welcomes a chorus of voices on a team. Clients seek her and ARTiculate out for ongoing skill-building and for guidance at pivotal moments, such as developing keynote presentations, preparing for difficult conversations, or messaging in response to crises.

Hilary has been coaching and teaching for 35 years. She has been a keynote speaker, host, and facilitator for global corporate events and TedX conferences. She is on faculty for the Denver Center for the Performing Arts and has been adjunct faculty for several universities. She is an active member of NSA and former board member of the Colorado Chapter. She is also a former board member of VASTA – the Voice and Speech Trainers Association.

Hilary is certified in Conversational Intelligence and CultureTalk and has earned the designation of Certified Speaking Professional. She holds an MFA in acting from the National Theatre Conservatory and a BA from Yale University.



## Hon. Timothy W. Conner

PRESIDING JUDGE, TENNESSEE WORKERS' COMPENSATION APPEALS BOARD

Timothy W. Conner is the presiding judge of the Tennessee Workers' Compensation Appeals Board, where he has served since August 1, 2014. Prior to that, Judge Conner practiced law for twenty-two years in the areas of workers' compensation, wills and estates, and general liability defense. He is also an Adjunct Professor at Lincoln Memorial University's Duncan School of Law, where he teaches Legal Writing and Workers' Compensation Law. He received his bachelor's degree from Boston University and his J.D. from Wake Forest University School of Law. He is a member of the Knoxville and Tennessee Bar Associations, the Hamilton Burnett American Inn of Court, and the National Association of Workers' Compensation Judiciary.



## Jeff Francis

**ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR, BUREAU OF WORKERS' COMPENSATION**

A native of middle-Tennessee, Jeff received his B.B.A. degree in Marketing from Austin Peay State University in 1983 and his master's degree in Labor Studies from the University of Massachusetts in 2000. He is a member of the 2008 graduating class of the Tennessee Government Executive Institute and of the 2017 graduating class of LeadTN. He is the former President of the Tennessee Labor Management Foundation.

As a Program Coordinator for the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development from 2004 until April 2008 he developed and managed the Medical Impairment Rating Registry.

Now the Assistant Administrator of the Tennessee Bureau of Workers' Compensation, his responsibilities include assisting with budgeting, Human Resources and Information Systems and supervising the Claims, Coverage and Communications aspects for the Bureau. He has been married to his college sweetheart for over 30 years and they have a son and daughter. Jeff enjoys gardening, traveling has served as a Mentor for the Tennessee Promise Educational Scholarship Program and is a grandfather.

He is a frequent speaker on workers' compensation issues.

## Sandy Garrett

**CHIEF DISCIPLINARY COUNSEL FOR THE BOARD OF PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY OF THE SUPREME COURT OF TENNESSEE**

Sandy Garrett is Chief Disciplinary Counsel for the Board of Professional Responsibility of the Supreme Court of Tennessee. Sandy has been with the Board of Professional Responsibility since October, 1992. She serves as the Executive Director of Tennessee Lawyers' Fund for Client Protection and as the Southeast Regional Vice President of National Client Protection Organization. She earned her J.D. degree from Vanderbilt University. She is an emeritus member of the Harry Phillips American Inn of Court, a current member of the Tennessee Bar Association (TBA) Committee on Ethics, and an honorary TBA Young Lawyers Fellow.



## Hon. Pele I. Godkin

**JUDGE, TENNESSEE WORKERS' COMPENSATION APPEALS BOARD**

Pele I. Godkin was appointed to the Tennessee Workers' Compensation Appeals Board by Governor Bill Lee on January 14, 2020. Judge Godkin began her practice in Tennessee with the Tennessee Bureau of Workers' Compensation shortly after the 2004 workers' compensation reform. Judge Godkin entered private practice in 2008 where she practiced law in the areas of workers' compensation and general liability defense. She received her bachelor's degree from Central Washington University and her law degree from Seattle University School of Law. She is a member of the Nashville and Tennessee Bar Associations, The Belmont University College of Law American Inn of Court, and the National Association of Workers' Compensation Judiciary.

## Troy Haley

**ADMINISTRATOR, BUREAU OF WORKERS' COMPENSATION**



Troy Haley is Administrator for the State of Tennessee's Bureau of Workers' Compensation. He has been with the Bureau since 2007. As a Workers' Compensation Specialist and Administrator's Designee he conducted hearings and issued determinations regarding temporary disability and medical benefits, reviewed and approved workers' compensation settlement agreements, and mediated workers' compensation disputes. In June 2014, he has served as administrative counsel for the Bureau and legislative liaison for the Bureau and Governor's office. He provided legal counsel to the Bureau Administrator and Medical Director and to other Bureau program areas. He drafted rules and legislation and works with the Governor's Office and the General Assembly to advance the administration's legislative agenda. He is a native of east Nashville and is a graduate of Stratford High School. He received his B.A. degree from David Lipscomb College, his M.A. degree from Tennessee State University, and his J.D. degree from the University of Memphis. He has been licensed to practice law in Tennessee since 1992. He has been a Rule 31 mediator since 2008. Prior to his state service, he worked as staff counsel for a title insurance company and was also in private practice.



## Dan Headrick, PT, CEAS III, CETS, Astym, MA

PHYSICAL THERAPIST AT STAR PHYSICAL THERAPY

Dan is a multi-talented professional with a background in both healthcare and leadership. After graduating from Lambuth College and the University of Tennessee at Memphis School of Allied Health (1990, 1992), he dedicated over 30 years to practicing physical therapy. He further expanded his qualifications by earning a master's degree in Pastoral and Ministerial Leadership from Northwest Nazarene University in 2022.

Dan is a Certified Ergonomic Assessment Specialist (Levels I & III) and a Certified Employment Testing Specialist. His passion for sharing his expertise led him to teach Functional Capacity Evaluations at Tennessee State University. He is a sought-after speaker, having presented at conferences like BAMA, SHRM, MSWCA, and various state-sponsored workers' compensation and safety conferences.

Dan is credited with creating the JDA portion of Tennessee's REWARD Program. His dedication to the field is further evidenced by his recognition as a finalist for the Sue Ann Head Award in 2022. Currently, he serves as the President of the Mid-South Workplace Compensation Association (MSWCA) and holds a position on the Executive Committee for the American Society of Safety Professionals (ASSP).



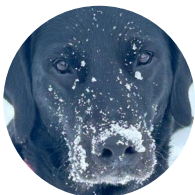
## Hon. Pamela Beason Johnson

**WORKERS' COMPENSATION JUDGE,  
TENNESSEE COURT OF WORKERS' COMPENSATION CLAIMS**

In May 2014, Judge Johnson was one of eight attorneys appointed to the newly established Tennessee Court of Workers' Compensation Claims. Now a twelve-member Court, Judge Johnson currently hears cases pending in Knoxville.

She is a member of the National Association of Workers' Compensation Judiciary, Tennessee Bar Association, Knoxville Bar Association, and East Tennessee Lawyers' Association for Women. She is the immediate Past-President of the National Association of Workers' Compensation Judiciary and chairman of the Lunch and Learn and New Judges' Boot Camp committees.

She is a regular speaker on issues of workers' compensation practice and procedures at the national, regional, state, and local levels. She received her bachelor's degree from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville in August 1997, and her law degree from the University of Memphis, Cecil C. Humphreys School of Law in May 2000.



## "Judy" Kilgore

**CERTIFIED THERAPY DOG, GEORGE & TAMMY KILGORE FAMILY/TRAINERS**

Both George & Tammy Kilgore are retired from working in agriculture with the State of Tennessee. George was the Director of the Davidson County Extension Office and Tammy worked as a Food Marketing Specialist. They now devote themselves to certified therapy dog work with their Goldador named Judy. They also help raise seeing eye and service dogs for Southeastern Guide Dogs. When not knee deep in puppies, they are knee deep in vegetable, herb and flower gardening at their home in Smyrna.



## Patsy Nickle

**VICE PRESIDENT OF EDUCATION AND BUSINESS RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT,  
JIMMY SIMPSON FOUNDATION'S SAFEHAVEN**

Patsy Nickle has been in the Workers' Compensation healthcare for more than 20 years. A graduate of Lee University, She is currently the V. P. of Bus. Dev. and Edu. at Safehaven/The Jimmy Simson Foundation. Her experience include Erlanger Hospital, The State of TN Brain Injury Program, NeuroRestorative ,Cumberland Children's Hospital and Nexus Health System as a clinical evaluator.

During her entire career she has dedicated herself to applying ethics to every endeavor, referral, insurance encounter, doctor, nurse, adjuster, attorney and client process. She believes that ethics plays a huge role in everyone involved with the healthcare system and the workers' compensation arena.



## Erik Pimentel

**TERRITORY MANAGER/PATIENT ADVOCATE AT SHAMROCK PROSTHETICS, INC.**

Originally from Brooklyn, New York, Erik is a graduate of St. John's University. He moved to Georgia in 2013, and two years later was involved in a work-related accident. Erik underwent several limb salvage surgeries before having his below the knee amputation. For the next 4 years, he was only able to wear his prosthesis for up to 4 hours a day while being treated by another prosthetic provider. Erik received a second opinion at Shamrock and experienced a completely different level of patient care, prosthetic education, and technology. He now wears an advanced technology prosthesis, enabling him to wear his new device for up to 16-17 hours a day. Erik's totally new perspective on life inspired him to seek employment at Shamrock, hoping to help other amputees avoid the pitfalls he previously faced. He went on to lose 120 pounds. Erik exhibits a "no excuses" attitude and has his own unique way of coaching and relating to patients.



## Laura Roberts, RN CCM

**CORVEL**

Laura Roberts RN CCM has been a registered nurse since 1987. Her clinical background includes ICU, general med/surg and ER. She has worked in the case management field for more than 30 years. She has been CCM certified since 2001.

She entered into world of workers compensation more than 20 years ago as a field case manager for Intracorp. She is currently the Case Management Manager for the TN office for CorVel Corporation. She holds a bachelor's in healthcare administration from the University of Memphis, her hometown. She currently resides in Nashville TN with her husband.



## Anastasia Settle, R.N., C.C.M

**CASE MANAGEMENT LIAISON AT CARLISLE MEDICAL**

Anastasia has over 30 years of nursing experience in the clinical, community, and workers compensation setting. She has had both the honor and pleasure of work as both a Certified Case Manager (CCM) and as a supervisor in multiple states. She obtained an Advanced Ministry Degree from Boyce College/SBTS in 2017. She currently works as a Case Management Liaison coordinating and volunteers for the local homeless coalition in SW FL where she resides.

While in nursing school, Anastasia participated on the Ethics board for a local hospital which sparked her interest in this field. She has since further studied Ethics while at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Anastasia also regularly interacts with various groups and peoples that suffer from discrimination within our society including members of the LGBTQI+, homeless, and religious communities. Anastasia has had the opportunity to speak on Ethics, Workplace Violence, various specific health topics, and about the Case Management process to many organizations including primary conferences for IWCI, ASIA (Arkansas), SHRM (FL), SAWCA, NC PRIMA, SCWCEA; Anastasia is an occasional speaker for CMSA and also provides CEU's and training for several insurance companies.

Currently Anastasia works for Carlisle Medical as the Case Management Liaison interacting with the multidisciplinary team including Case Management, Durable Medical Equipment specialists, and Pharmacists to ensure that the care provided to the persons that we have the privilege of caring for truly have the benefit of our exceptional team.





## Gerry Stanley, M.D., P-CEO

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT & CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER AT HARVARD MEDTECH

Gerry Stanley, M.D., is an accomplished third-generation family doctor, speaker, author, and catalyst for change in the workers compensation industry. With a passion for healthcare transformation, Dr. Stanley has spoken and presented extensively on the topic of healthcare IT, population health management, self-insured health plan management, and medical consumerism and direct to employer network enablement.

His visionary perspective on the opportunity to find a solution for the growing opioid epidemic and mental health crisis by creating a resource for clinicians to treat patients holistically is what he describes as a “once in a lifetime opportunity to solve a societal need.” As the Senior Vice President and Chief Medical Officer for Harvard MedTech, his belief that a collaborative approach and strong foundational understanding of health care delivery, health systems, insurance brokers/consultants, and self-insured employers is critical to scale health plans and achieve the quadruple AIM of healthcare. Considered by many, an industry disruptor, his upcoming book entitled “The Innovation Equation” provides a framework for safe and effective innovation and effective cross organization communication to foster a culture of change.

Most recently, Dr. Stanley served as the Chief Medical Officer for the Employer and Consumer division of Cerner, where he was able to put into play his unique ability to identify market specific opportunities for development, stabilization, and growth. This included developing a value-based care and population health strategy for critical access hospitals, community hospitals, and a framework for health plan development for integrated delivery networks. While at Cerner, he also had the responsibility for Cerner’s national system on on-site and near-site health centers/pharmacies/occupational centers serving self-insured employers, care coordination teams, a national team of corporate wellness strategists, an analytics division, a third-party administrator (TPA), and the self-insured and direct-to-employer insurance strategies for Cerner clients.

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 three years and graduated with clinical honors and received 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 where he served as the chief resident. He practiced medicine for over 10 years in a variety of practice settings with group/hospital leadership positions before attending the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University and graduated from the Physician CEO program.



## Hon. Dwight E. Tarwater

SUPREME COURT JUSTICE FOR THE STATE OF TENNESSEE

Dwight E. Tarwater was confirmed by the General Assembly in 2023 as the newest justice on the Tennessee Supreme Court. Justice Tarwater was nominated by Governor Bill Lee.

Justice Tarwater was born and raised in Knoxville. He earned a B.A. in political science from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. He was named a Torchbearer, the University’s highest honor, recognizing excellence in academics, leadership and service. He earned his law degree from his alma mater.

After working as a judicial law clerk for Judge Houston M. Goddard of the Tennessee Court of Appeals, Eastern Section in Knoxville, Justice Tarwater joined the law firm Egerton, McAfee, Armistead and Davis and four short years later was named a partner. Three years later, his name was on the door at Paine Tarwater Bickers LLP. He was invested in the Knoxville legal community, serving in almost every leadership position possible at the Knoxville Bar Association.

Justice Tarwater developed a national reputation in handling complex litigation cases. He has managed hundreds of complex cases at the trial and appellate levels in both federal and state courts and has developed a particular talent for legal discovery, expert testimony, and jury trials. As a result, he has handled cases in all three Grand Divisions of Tennessee and more than 20 states.

In 2006, Justice Tarwater was inducted into the American College of Trial Lawyers, which is comprised of the best trial lawyers in the United States and Canada. He has repeatedly been recognized as one of the Best Lawyers in America, which is compiled through a peer review survey of thousands of lawyers.

From 2014 to 2019, Justice Tarwater served as general counsel to former Governor Bill Haslam. The job of general counsel to the governor is broad and all encompassing. From reviewing every legal document the governor signs to analyzing proposed legislation, the position handles a multitude of legal, political and governmental issues. Justice Tarwater proposed reform measures in criminal justice, juvenile justice, law enforcement, and drug treatment as well as advised the Governor on criminal law issues involving defendants, such as extraditions, sentencing, and clemency requests, including those in capital cases.

Recognizing the impact even modest legal guidance can have on an individual person, Justice Tarwater has consistently accepted cases pro bono from Legal Aid of East Tennessee as well as accepted other cases at reduced fees.

Justice Tarwater served on the board of directors of LAET, the Volunteer Legal Assistance Program and the Pro Bono Project.



## Deniece Thomas

**COMMISSIONER, DEPARTMENT OF LABOR & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

Governor Bill Lee appointed Deniece Thomas as Commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development in September 2022.

Before her appointment, Commissioner Thomas had served as the agency's Deputy Commissioner since 2019. She started her career with the state of Tennessee in 2007 working in the Clarksville American Job Center. Over the years, Commissioner Thomas has risen through the ranks of the Department as a Director, Assistant Administrator, Assistant Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner.

Commissioner Thomas is a member of the National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA) where she serves as co-chair for Workforce ITSC, previous chair of the Employment and Training Committee, past member of both the Veterans Committee since 2015 and the National Apprenticeship Workgroup.

Additionally, she also serves as the State Workforce Liaison for the National Governor's Association where she serves on the Executive Committee. She also serves as a member of the Tennessee Advisory Council on Intergovernmental Relations.



Commissioner Thomas is a 2014 Graduate of LEAD Tennessee Alliance 5 and Leadership Tennessee Class VIII. She holds a Master of Arts degree in Civic Leadership from Lipscomb University in Nashville and a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Alabama Birmingham. She is a member of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.



## Hon. Meredith Balthrop Weaver

**JUDGE, TENNESSEE WORKERS' COMPENSATION APPEALS BOARD**

Meredith Balthrop Weaver was appointed to the Appeals Board by Governor Bill Lee in June of 2022. Prior to that, she worked for 17 years in the private sector, primarily in workers' compensation, employment law, and general liability defense. A Tennessee native, she went to Auburn University for her undergraduate degree in communications. She returned to her native state to obtain her law degree from University of Tennessee and remained in Knoxville following graduation. While in private practice, she was on the Board for CASA of East Tennessee and served in other civic community groups as well. She currently serves in various capacities on the Boards for her children's schools and is active in the Knoxville Bar Association, as well as the East Tennessee Lawyers' Association for Women.



## Bob Wilson, BA, WRP, WRPA

**PRESIDENT OF WORKCOMP COLLEGE.COM; CO-FOUNDER AND FORMER CEO OF WORKERSCOMPENSATION.COM**

Bob is president of WorkCompCollege.com, as well as a founding partner and former President & CEO of WorkersCompensation.com. He has presented at seminars and conferences on a variety of topics, related to both technology within the workers' compensation industry, and bettering the workers' comp system through improved employee/employer relations and claims management techniques. He is the author of "From Bob's Cluttered Desk", a blog selected as a top workers' compensation blog by LexisNexis. He has been designated as one of the "50 Most Influential People in the Workers' Compensation Industry" by the SEAK Workers' Compensation and Occupational Medical Conference. He was also the recipient of the 2019 Comp Laude Industry Leader Award.

With an extensive business management and human resource background, Bob brings a strong employer and corporate voice to the workers' compensation arena. Known for an extraordinary sense of humor, his presentations reflect both entertaining and practical advice for both people managing claims and the people "picking up the tab".

He was raised in Durango, Colorado and is a graduate of Fort Lewis College. He resides with his wife in Bradenton, FL.



## Keven Wilberding

**VICE PRESIDENT, AMBASSADOR SERVICE GROUP**

Keven Wilberding is currently the Vice President of Ambassador Service Group, a full-service provider of interpretation, translation and non-emergency transportation. Keven's diverse background and experience allow him to communicate effectively with people from all walks of life. He has the ability to bridge the gap between individuals and cultures. Keven is a gifted teacher and

communicator who has spoken to groups from around the globe. He has traveled in various capacities throughout the world observing cultures firsthand.



## Kimberly Wiswell, CMSP-Fellow

**DIRECTOR OF CLIENT SERVICES, EMBEDDED AI AT GRADIENT AI**

Kim has been engaged in workers' compensation, managed care, and occupational health since the late '70s, with a focus on data analysis and predictive modeling over the past six years. Kim joined Gradient AI, an insurtech provider of claims and underwriting solutions to the Property & Casualty and Group Health arenas, in early 2021 and in her current role, serves as Director, Client Service, Embedded Analytics.

Kim's extensive knowledge of workers' compensation includes medical bill review, provider networks, data analytics, system design & development, workflow re-engineering, and operations management. Over her career, she worked for a diverse set of employers including Coventry; CLARA Analytics; MEDVAL; Fair, Isaac; Health Net; Fremont Compensation Insurance Group; CompPartners; Beech Street; and Medata. She has also consulted for the California Workers' Compensation Institute, the California Division of Workers' Compensation, Kaiser Permanente, Sutter Health, Optum, and many others. She served as president of the National Medicare Secondary Payer Network and has spoken numerous times at conferences concerning MSP matters, as well as having provided consulting services to the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).

Kim attended California State University, Long Beach, and Western State College of Law.

# Appendix

1. [Resources for Therapy Animal Needs](#)

## Resources for Therapy Animal Needs

PROVIDED BY TAMMY AND GEORGE KILGORE

### **Alliance of Therapy Dogs**

P.O. Box 20227

Cheyenne, WY 82003

(307) 432-0272

[www.therapydogs.com](http://www.therapydogs.com)

Email: [office@therapydogs.com](mailto:office@therapydogs.com)

### **Nashville Therapy Pets**

6688 Nolensville Road, Suite 108-268

Brentwood, TN 37027

(615) 307-0099

[www.nashvilletherapypets.org](http://www.nashvilletherapypets.org)

Email: [nashvilletherapypets@gmail.com](mailto:nashvilletherapypets@gmail.com)

### **American Kennel Club**

8051 Arco Corporate Drive

Raleigh, NC 27617

(919) 816-3527

[www.akc.org](http://www.akc.org)

Email: [akctherapydog@akc.org](mailto:akctherapydog@akc.org)

### **West Tennessee Therapy Dogs**

[www.westtntherapydogs.org](http://www.westtntherapydogs.org)

### **Therapy ARC (Animals Reaching Clients)**

(615) 519-0719

[www.therapyarc.org](http://www.therapyarc.org)

Email: [therapyarcinquiries@gmail.com](mailto:therapyarcinquiries@gmail.com)

### **Music City Pet Partners**

[www.musiccitypetpartners.org](http://www.musiccitypetpartners.org)

Email: [info@musiccitypetpartners.org](mailto:info@musiccitypetpartners.org)

### **Love on a Leash**

P.O. Box 4548

Oceanside, CA 92052-4548

(760) 740-2326

[www.loveonaleash.org](http://www.loveonaleash.org)

Email: [info@loveonaleash.org](mailto:info@loveonaleash.org)