



JED Policy Summit: Shifting Student Mental Health From Advocacy to Action

Speakers

Angela Kimball | Senior Vice President of Advocacy & Public Policy, Inseparable

Angela Kimball is the Senior Vice President of Advocacy and Public Policy at Inseparable. Kimball is a nationally recognized expert in mental health policy who is passionate about mobilizing people to champion better care and fight inequities for people with mental health conditions. She is a frequent contributor to national media on mental health policy, and previously served as National Director of Government Relations, Policy and Advocacy at the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), where she helped advance significant legislation and investments in mental health services.

Kimball's path in the mental health movement was inspired by her son's path of recovery after a diagnosis of bipolar disorder. Her quest to find mental health care led her to early work as a family advocate, which propelled her to pursue deeper levels of policy and advocacy. As executive director of NAMI Oregon, her work led to the reinstatement of mental health and substance use coverage in the Oregon Health Plan, Oregon's Medicaid program, and the overwhelming bipartisan passage of Oregon's comprehensive mental health parity bill. She later provided expertise on a broad range of policy issues across the country as director of state policy for NAMI's national office and gained invaluable expertise helping implement Oregon's transformative, community-governed integration of Medicaid health, mental health, substance use, and dental services as an Innovator Agent with the Oregon Health Authority.

Kimball graduated from Linfield University in McMinnville, Oregon, and has received multiple awards for her work on children's mental health reform and mental health parity. In her spare time, she enjoys reading fiction, spoiling her cats, and kayaking on the Deschutes River in Oregon.

Anita Chandra | Vice President and Director, RAND Social and Economic Well-Being

Anita Chandra (she/her) is Vice President and Director of RAND Social and Economic Well-Being and a senior policy researcher at the RAND Corporation. The division manages RAND's Center to Advance Racial Equity Policy, as well as other centers on climate, housing, drug policy, policing, and civil justice. She leads studies on civic well-being and community planning; disaster response and resilience; public health emergency preparedness; health and health equity; child health and development; and effects of military deployment on families.

Throughout her career, Chandra has engaged government and nongovernment partners to consider cross-sector solutions for improving community well-being and to build more robust systems, implementation, and evaluation capacity. The work has taken many forms, including engaging with federal and local government agencies on building systems for emergency preparedness and resilience both in the United States and globally; partnering with private-sector organizations to develop the science base around child systems; and collaborating with city governments and foundations to modernize data systems and measure environmental sustainability, well-being, and civic transformation. Chandra has also partnered with community organizations to conduct broad-scale health and environmental needs assessments, examine the integration of health and human service systems, and determine how to integrate equity and address the needs of historically marginalized populations in human service systems. The projects have occurred in partnership with businesses, foundations, and other community organizations. Chandra earned a Dr.P.H. in population and family health sciences from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, an M.P.H. in maternal and child health from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Public Health, and a B.A. in child development from Tufts University.

Ann Marie Buerkle | Principal, Williams & Jensen, PLLC

Ann Marie Buerkle is an accomplished executive with a proven record leading a United States federal agency and making critical legal and public-policy decisions, both as head of an agency and as a member of Congress.

Buerkle spent more than two decades in public service, most recently as the Acting Chairman and Commissioner at the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). During her over six years at the commission, she encouraged transparency and strived for more inclusive engagement with all sectors of the regulated community. Her leadership at the agency ensured consumer safety, increased the agency's effectiveness, and modernized its ability to address emerging e-commerce safety issues.

Before joining the CPSC, Buerkle represented the people of New York's 25th Congressional district in the U.S. House of Representatives. There, she served on the Oversight and Government Reform, Foreign Affairs, and Veterans' Affairs Committees. Prior to her time in Congress, Buerkle was a Assistant New York State Attorney General for 13 years. She started her career as a registered nurse.

Given her ability to work across party lines and the breadth of matters she has worked on throughout her career, Buerkle engages on a wide portfolio of issues. She assists corporate, trade association, and institutional clients in challenges involving government agencies and regulatory and legislative communities.

Annie Slease | Co-Founder, Mental Health Literacy Collaborative

Annie Slease, M.Ed., sits at the intersection of education and mental health, both professionally and personally. When her child's crisis emerged over a dozen years ago, Slease was a classroom teacher unaware of mental health literacy. Inspired by her personal experience navigating family mental illness without information or support, she repurposed her 25-year teaching career into advocacy. Since 2017, she has served her home state of Delaware as a trusted voice for individuals and family members affected by mental illness, working in policy, education, community, and health-care spaces to raise awareness, address gaps, and champion upstream solutions. She is most passionate about empowering youth and their trusted adults with mental health literacy. Slease was recently appointed by the governor as a voting member of the Delaware Behavioral Health Consortium. Slease is a mother, wife, teacher, and advocate, and she is co-founder of the Mental Health Literacy Collaborative.

Daniel Eisenberg, Ph.D. | Principal Investigator, Healthy Minds Network

Daniel Eisenberg is a Professor of Health Policy and Management at the Fielding School of Public Health at the University of California, Los Angeles, and was previously a faculty member at the University of Michigan from 2004 to 2020. His training is in economics (he has a B.A. and Ph.D. from Stanford University) and mental health services research (he completed an NIH postdoc at the University of California, Berkeley). His broad research goal is to improve understanding of how to invest effectively in the mental health of young people.

He is a Principal Investigator for the Healthy Minds Network for research on adolescent and young-adult mental health. The research network administers the Healthy Minds Study, a national survey of student mental health and related factors, and facilitates the development, testing, and dissemination of innovative programs and interventions for student mental health. Eisenberg is currently writing a book about investments in children's mental health in collaboration with Ramesh Raghavan.

Donna Volpitta, Ed.D. | Co-Founder, Mental Health Literacy Collaborative

Donna Volpitta, Ed.D., is an educator, author, and speaker who loves making the brain science of resilience and mental health easy to understand and apply. She is co-founder of the Mental Health Literacy Collaborative, a board member of the One Revolution Foundation, a member of the Mental Wellness Initiative and Children's Wellness Initiative of the Global Wellness Institute, a Global Presence Ambassador for Parenting 2.0, and a member of the Character Collaborative. Volpitta is a former classroom teacher with experience in both general and special education, and the mother of four fantastic young adults.

Hannah Wesolowski | Chief Advocacy Officer, National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)

Hannah Wesolowski and the entire Government Relations, Policy, and Advocacy team work with advocates, partners, and NAMI leaders to enact policy changes that will improve the lives of all people affected by mental health conditions. She believes in the power of advocates sharing their stories to advance research, increase mental health funding, improve access to care, expand social supports, and decriminalize mental illness.

She came to NAMI in 2017 with more than a decade of experience in advocacy, joining the team after five years at the Public Affairs Council to help associations, corporations, and nonprofit advocacy groups build government affairs efforts programs. She previously led political advocacy efforts at the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association and the American Institute of Architects.

Wesolowski grew up in New Hampshire and has a B.A. from New York University, where she also earned an M.P.A. from NYU's Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service.

Jenny Achilles | Senior Director and Chief Program Officer, Trellis Foundation

Jenny Achilles joined the Trellis Foundation (then Trellis Company) in 2013 with nearly a decade of higher-education service in various capacities, including student affairs and study abroad advising. Achilles serves on local and national committees, including the Funders Collaborative for Higher Education in Prison and Reentry Support; Central Texas Education Funders Network Steering committee; the Texas Rural Funders Membership and Dues Task Force; and the Grantmakers for Education Learning, Evaluation, and Data Impact Group and Postsecondary Access and Attainment Impact Group. She previously served on the membership committee for the National Scholarship Providers Association from 2015 to 2017. She also leads the board of directors for a nonprofit dance and wellness studio in Austin.

Achilles earned a bachelor's degree in communication from Lamar University and master's degrees from the University of Texas at Austin in journalism and public policy, with a focus on nonprofit studies.

Jessica Kirchner | Policy Analyst, National Governors Association (NGA)

Jessica Kirchner serves as a Policy Analyst for the NGA's Center for Best Practices Children and Families and Postsecondary Education policy divisions.

Prior to joining the NGA, Kirchner was the Senior External Affairs Associate for Ballast Research, where she led the strategic communications, government relations, and events program for Ballast's federal projects. Originally from Boston, Kirchner was a legislative intern for Congresswoman Katherine Clark and a constituent-services intern for Governor Charlie Baker during undergrad. Kirchner graduated from the University of Connecticut with two bachelor's degrees in political science and economics, and a minor in Middle East studies with an Arabic concentration.

Jillian Meinhardt | Policy Analyst, National Governors Association (NGA)

Jillian Meinhardt serves as a policy analyst for the K-12 Education Team at the National Governors Association's Center for Best Practices. In that role, she supports student and staff well-being, academic supports, and educator recruitment and retention. Prior to joining the NGA, Meinhardt served as the Clinical Team Leader for The Therapeutic Lower and Middle-School at Sheppard Pratt School. Meinhardt supported students through in-school counseling and collaborated with parents, administration and outside providers to best help her students. Along with supervising staff, she advocated for student and staff well-being. Meinhardt implemented system-wide policies surrounding suicide prevention and awareness, and was an active member of the school threat-assessment team. Meinhardt is a graduate of the University of Maryland, College Park, and earned her Master of Social Work from Rutgers University. Meinhardt is a licensed clinical social worker and an active practitioner for children, young adults, and families in Maryland, Virginia, and Washington, D.C.

John MacPhee | Chief Executive Officer, The Jed Foundation (JED)

John MacPhee brings 25 years of leadership and management experience from the business and not-for-profit settings to his role at JED. Passionate about supporting young adults in their transition to adulthood, MacPhee advises several organizations including the S. Jay Levy Fellowship for Future Leaders at City College, Trek Medics, Crisis Text Line, the Health Policy and Management Department at the Mailman School of Public Health, and HIV Hero.

Earlier in his career, he served in executive positions for Par Pharmaceutical, Inc. and Forest Laboratories, where he oversaw functions such as business development, alliance management, clinical development, regulatory affairs, sales, and marketing.

In 2016, MacPhee received the Allan Rosenfield Alumni Award for Excellence in the field of public health from the Joseph L. Mailman School of Public Health at Columbia University. He earned a B.A. from Columbia College, an M.B.A. from New York University, and an M.P.H. from Columbia University.

Jorge Alvarez | Manager of Corporate and Strategic Partnerships, Active Minds

Jorge Alvarez (he/him) is a first-gen Latiné social impact strategist, mental health advocate, and creative storyteller who uses his love of storytelling to combat stigma by cultivating space for collective reflection, unlearning limiting beliefs, and breaking cycles both on and offline. He has grown a community of over 130,000 across his social platforms and was recognized by MTV as one of 30 participants to be part of the inaugural Mental Health Youth Action Forum at the White House, where he spoke alongside Selena Gomez, the U.S. First Lady, and the U.S. Surgeon General. In addition to creating, Alvarez also speaks at venues, universities, and institutions across the U.S. to empower and educate young people about mental health, while also working with companies and nonprofits to drive impact and inspiring action through creative storytelling, strategic partnerships, building intentional campaigns, and developing accessible digital tools that center BIPOC and Gen Z.

Laura Conrad, M.S.W. | Senior Consultant, The Technical Assistance Collaborative (TAC)

Laura Conrad (she, her, hers) is a behavioral health-care leader with over 20 years of demonstrated experience in government administration and special expertise in child-serving systems, including child welfare and Medicaid. She has experience in behavioral health policy and service design, development, and implementation, with extensive experience in Medicaid authority and financing, contract and project management, and early and periodic screening, diagnostic, and treatment litigation. Prior to joining TAC, Conrad worked for MassHealth, serving as the interim child compliance officer for Rosie D. v. Romney. She oversaw the seven Children's Behavioral Health Initiative services and successfully developed and implemented an applied behavior analysis service within a Medicaid space.

Laura Erickson-Schroth, M.D., M.A. | Chief Medical Officer, The Jed Foundation (JED)

Laura Erickson-Schroth is committed to improving mental health through education and resource creation. She provides guidance on how individuals, families, schools, communities, media, and other youth-serving organizations can take action to protect mental health and prevent suicide, and ensures that all JED content is evidence-based. Before JED, she provided crisis intervention and mental health support to patients in New York City emergency rooms, including as an attending psychiatrist and associate professor at the Columbia University Comprehensive Psychiatric Emergency Program. Her LGBT work has focused on LGBTQ+ mental health, and she continues to see clients at Hetrick-Martin Institute for LGBTQIA+ Youth. Erickson-Schroth obtained her medical degree from Dartmouth Medical School. She completed a psychiatry residency at New York University, public psychiatry fellowship at Mount Columbia University, and consultation-liaison psychiatry fellowship at Mount Sinai.

Laurel Stine, J.D., M.A. | Executive Vice President and Chief Policy Officer, American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP)

Laurel Stine leads AFSP's Washington D.C.-based policy team in the development and advancement of federal and state policy to save lives and bring hope to those affected by suicide.

Prior to joining AFSP, Stine engaged in mental health and disability policy development and advocacy for over 25 years, most recently as Senior Director of Congressional and Federal Affairs and Partnerships for the American Psychological Association. In her role, she advocated for the availability and accessibility of psychological services, primarily involving public and private health insurance and telehealth; led advocacy organizational relationship initiatives; and created strategic alliances. Stine also served as the chief lobbyist for the Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law, a national legal-advocacy organization where she managed a diverse portfolio of federal legislative and regulatory issues affecting children and adults with mental disorders in the areas of health care, education, and justice.

Stine now serves as the Chair of the Board of Directors for the Mental Health Liaison Group, a coalition of over 70 national behavioral health organizations, and co-lead the Health Policy Committee for over 10 years with coalition successes, including the enactment of mental health parity, the Affordable Care Act, and comprehensive mental health reform.

Stine received a bachelor's degree in psychology from UCLA, a master's degree in clinical psychology from SUNY-Binghamton, and a J.D. degree from the Washington College of Law at the American University in Washington, D.C.

Lisa Wiggins | Acting Lead, Behavioral Health Coordinating Unit, Center for Disease Control (CDC)

Lisa Wiggins (she/her) is a behavioral scientist at the National Center of Injury Prevention and Control at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). She is Acting Lead of the newly established Behavioral Health Coordinating Unit, which has been charged with coordinating and advancing mental health and substance abuse activities across the agency. Wiggins has over 20 years of experience as a public health professional at CDC. In that time, she has developed, coordinated, and implemented public health programs; guided diverse teams of professionals; and conducted scientific research. Wiggins is passionate about the topic of mental health and working with others to best support individuals and families with diverse mental health needs. She is a former child and adolescent counselor and has extensive experience with psychological assessment throughout the lifespan. Wiggins has graduate-level training in developmental psychology (Ph.D., M.A.), clinical psychology (M.S.), and health promotion and behavior (M.P.H.). She has over 100 published papers and oral presentations and is committed to supporting diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility, and belonging.

Loren Muwonge | Youth Mental Health Advocate

Loren Muwonge represents the 2nd District on the Milwaukee County Youth Commission.

Loren is a senior in high school and will graduate in May of 2024. Last summer she studied at Harvard University for seven weeks and earned eight college credits through their Secondary School Program and this summer she studied at Princeton University through Leadership Enterprise for a Diverse America (LEDA), which is an all expenses paid five week program that selects 100 of the nation's top students each year to be exposed to the most elite universities in the U.S. and become cultivated as leaders, as well as receive college guidance. Loren has shadowed members of NASA and met with Members of Congress to advocate for the rectification of redlining and more opportunities for those underrepresented in STEM. This past summer Loren participated in a water stewardship program to develop her knowledge and advocacy towards the quality of water in Milwaukee.

Loren is also active in "STEP-UP", an enrichment program at the Medical College of Wisconsin and founded a program called Planting Seeds to enrich elementary students in her community.

Loren is an intern with PATCH (Providers and Teens Communicating for Healthcare), is active in Graduation Plus which is an enrichment program through the Boys & Girls Club, Youth Rising Up, and serves in her church, Evolve.

Loren serves on the Youth Commission because she aspires to better her community and is passionate about topics such as the rectification of redlining, homelessness, mental health, mass incarceration, police brutality, education, and healthcare affordability. Racial equity is important to Loren because she has directly experienced racial inequity and wants to be a part of the change she wants to see.

Nance Roy, Ed.D. | Chief Clinical Officer, The Jed Foundation (JED)

Nance Roy serves as the Jed Foundation's Chief Clinical Officer and is an Assistant Clinical Professor at the Yale School of Medicine's Department of Psychiatry. She has over 20 years of experience as a psychologist working in college mental health. She served as the Assistant Dean of Health and Wellness at Sarah Lawrence College, and most recently was the Associate Dean of Health and Wellness at Rhode Island School of Design. Her publications have focused on effective strategies for promoting emotional well-being among teens and young adults, as well as treatment and management of at-risk students on college campuses.

Roy has been actively involved in strategic-planning initiatives focusing on a holistic approach to education, crisis management, and a public health model for delivery of care in high schools and on college campuses. Roy is a senior advisor for the National College Depression Partnership, serves on the Mental Health Task Force for the Ruderman Foundation, and has worked on mental health initiatives with the U.S. Surgeon General, the Higher Education Mental Health Alliance, the Department of Defense, the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Milken Institute, the Clinton Health Matters initiative, and college and university systems across the country. Roy earned a B.S. from the University of Rhode Island, an M.S. from the University of North Carolina, and an Ed.D. from Harvard University.

Nicole Ruzinski Bertsch | Principal, Williams & Jensen, PLLC

Nicole Ruzinski Bertsch joined Williams & Jensen in 2014 as a legislative analyst and before becoming an associate with the firm. She specializes in monitoring and analyzing legislative and regulatory proposals and legal research.

Prior to joining Williams & Jensen, Ruzinski Bertsch worked in the government affairs at several offices in Washington, D.C. She also interned for the U.S. House of Representatives. While in law school, Ruzinski Bertsch served as a legal intern for the U.S. Tax Court. Before moving to Washington, D.C., in 2009, she served as a legislative assistant to Wisconsin State Senator Alberta Darling, managing the senator's district office and coordinating constituent outreach. Ruzinski Bertsch also worked on the senator's 2008 re-election campaign and as a finance intern for the Republican Party of Wisconsin.

Rafael Campos | Deputy Director of Public Engagement in the Office of the Surgeon General, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Rafael Campos is the Deputy Director of Public Engagement in the Office of the Surgeon General, where he works with public and private partners to advance the Surgeon General's priorities. Having served in the Office of the Surgeon General for the past three presidential administrations, his work has focused on mental health, substance abuse and addiction, suicide prevention, and the COVID-19 pandemic response. Previously, he worked for the President's Council on Fitness, Sports, and Nutrition, where he supported First Lady Michelle Obama's Let's Move! campaign. He earned his master's degree from Georgetown University and his bachelor's degree from Rutgers University, and is currently pursuing his M.B.A. and M.P.P. on a part-time basis at the University of Maryland. He lives in Washington, D.C., with his wife, 7-month-old daughter, and pitbull.

Sakshee Chawla | Senior Policy Analyst, State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO)

Sakshee Chawla joined SHEEO as a senior policy analyst in June 2023. In her role, she has partnered with state higher-education leaders to replicate and scale the City University of New York's nationally recognized Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) and Accelerate, Complete, and Engage support program to increase college completion rates. She also works to promote improved student wellness through the development and implementation of state- and system-wide policies that advance student mental health care. Her research interests include student success, educational equity, and upward mobility.

Before joining SHEEO, Chawla served as a research analyst and project manager on the Workforce of the Future initiative at Brookings. She studied the demographic changes in the composition of labor unions and sought to understand whether unionization status is associated with worker happiness, job satisfaction, and productivity. As a part of her capstone project and thesis in graduate school, Chawla partnered with the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education to assess the effect of the state's test-optional admissions policies in reducing barriers and improving access to higher education, particularly for disadvantaged students. Chawla's work examining the vital role of community colleges in fostering economic growth was recently published in the book "America's Hidden Economic Engines: How Community Colleges Can Drive Shared Prosperity." Before graduate school, Chawla worked at EAB, where she studied topics including developmental education, faculty and staff mental health, social and emotional learning, and student learning loss.

Chawla holds a master's degree in public policy from the Harvard Kennedy School of Government and a Bachelor of Arts in economics and psychology from Smith College. Outside of work, Chawla enjoys traveling, reading, and testing new recipes both in her kitchen and at local restaurants.

Tenly Pau Biggs, MSW, LMSW | Deputy Director at the Office of Behavioral Health Equity (OBHE), Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

Tenly Pau Biggs, M.S.W., L.M.S.W., is the Deputy Director at the Office of Behavioral Health Equity (OBHE) at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). She is coordinating SAMHSA's efforts to reduce disparities in mental and substance-use disorders across racial, ethnic, LGBTQIA+, and other underserved populations.

Biggs is a member of a work group dedicated to implementing the HHS response to the Memorandum on Condemning and Combating Racism, Xenophobia, and Intolerance Against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAP) in the United States.

Prior to joining OBHE, she was the grants coordinator for the Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS) and the lead for the disparity impact statement and strategy (DIS) work pertaining to the access, service use, and behavioral health outcomes of discretionary grants at SAMHSA.

Biggs was the former primary and behavioral health-care integration lead for CMHS grant programs. Previously the mental health lead at the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Office of Minority Health, she provided technical assistance on achieving health equity in health plans, health systems and networks, hospitals, and primary-care providers. She also updated CMS' Disparity Impact Statement for health plans and providers review their disparities data and create an action and implementation plan to close the identified gaps.

Biggs is a former Peace Corps volunteer who served in Niger. She continues to build upon her areas of interest in leadership, management, and training opportunities within AAPI communities. She is a licensed social worker in Maryland, Baltimore, and received her Master of Social Work degree at the University of Maryland, Baltimore. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree in international relations from the University of Southern California.

Zainab Okolo, Ed.D. | Senior Vice President of Policy, Advocacy, and Government Relations, The Jed Foundation (JED)

Zainab Okolo is a higher-education policy and mental health expert, advocate, and educator, focused on helping students overcome barriers so they can learn, earn, and lead fulfilling lives.

Previously a strategist with the Lumina Foundation, Okolo established and directed the foundation's holistic student supports portfolio, which centered thought leadership and investments in student mental health; worked to significantly improve student success and increase credential attainment; and focused on the urgent needs of people of color, adult learners, student parents, and others who have traditionally struggled to succeed at learning beyond high school. As a trauma-informed licensed mental health clinician, Okolo has supported individuals, families, and institutions in adopting strategies to overcome stress, anxiety, and other complex diagnoses. As demonstrated by her experience, Okolo remains a strong advocate for increased and equitable access to high-quality mental health services and resources for all college-aged students, working to remove barriers, especially related to mental health.

With over a decade of professional experience in higher-education research and student services, Okolo has worked to help higher-education and workforce providers facilitate and validate high-quality learning and training—inside and outside the classroom. Her research has specifically focused on the needs of equity populations, including first-generation college students.

Okolo earned her doctorate in education from George Washington University, her master's degree in marriage and family therapy from Syracuse University, and her bachelor's degree in family science from the University of Maryland, College Park. She is a native of Washington, D.C.