



NAPSEC Annual Leadership Conference

January 18–21, 2026

Hyatt Regency Mission Bay Spa and Marina
San Diego, CA



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CONFERENCE PLANNING COMMITTEE

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Chapel Hill Academy



WELCOME

On behalf of the National Association of Private Special Education Centers (NAPSEC), it is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the NAPSEC Leadership Conference in beautiful San Diego, California! This year's conference brings together leaders from across the country who are committed to advancing services and support for individuals with disabilities—from early intervention through adulthood. As executive leaders, administrators and professionals who operate schools and programs dedicated to special education, your presence here affirms your dedication to excellence and innovation in our field.



Over the course of the conference, you'll have the opportunity to engage with thought leaders and colleagues through keynote presentations, dynamic breakout sessions, and valuable networking opportunities. Our program is designed to address the critical areas that impact our work every day; leadership, legal compliance, fiscal responsibility, and evidence-based best practices, equipping you with tools and insights that you can take back to your organizations and communities.

Whether this is your first NAPSEC conference or you are a returning participant, we are thrilled to have you with us. We encourage you to fully engage in the sessions, ask questions, share your experiences, and make meaningful connections with fellow leaders who share your passion and purpose.

A special note of thanks to the conference planning committee, and NAPSEC's CEO and Executive Director, Danielle Damm, for their significant role and contributions in planning this conference.

Thank you for being here! I look forward to a productive, inspiring, and energizing time together in San Diego.

Kathy Flannery

Conference Committee Chair





**HYATT REGENCY MISSION BAY SPA
AND MARINA**

1441 Quivira Road
San Diego, California 92109
+1 619 224 1234
hyattregencymissionbay.com



**FLOOR PLAN
LEVEL 1**



CONFERENCE AGENDA

SUNDAY, JANUARY 18TH

10:30 AM - 11:30 AM

Point Loma

CONFERENCE COMMITTEE MEETING

11:30 AM - 12:30 PM

Belmont

NAPSEC BOARD OF DIRECTORS & NCASES COMMISSION LUNCHEON

Sponsored by Marketing Business Solutions. By invitation only.

12:00 PM - 4:00 PM

Main Lobby

REGISTRATION

12:30 PM - 2:30 PM

Mariner Point

NAPSEC BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

1:00 PM - 5:00 PM

Regatta Pavilion

EXHIBITOR SETUP

2:30 PM - 4:30 PM

Mariner Point

NCASES COMMISSION MEETING

6:00 PM - 7:00 PM

Sunset Terrace

NEWCOMER RECEPTION

This reception provides an opportunity for first time conference attendees to meet NAPSEC Board Members and other new attendees in a smaller setting immediately before the Welcome Reception.

7:00 PM - 8:00 PM

Banyan Court & Lawn

WELCOME RECEPTION - *Sponsored by Partlow Insurance*

Catch up with colleagues and make new friends over bites and drinks on the beautiful Banyan Court & Lawn.



CONFERENCE AGENDA

MONDAY, JANUARY 19TH

7:30 AM - 8:15 AM - BREAKFAST ROUNDTABLE:

Crown Point

NJASEPS Members Breakfast Roundtable

An informal opportunity for New Jersey State Association members to join a facilitated discussion with other NJASEPS members.

7:30 AM - 8:15 AM - BREAKFAST ROUNDTABLE:

Mariner Point

Residential Programs

Sponsored by League School for Autism

Connect with colleagues from residential programs for a relaxed breakfast roundtable focused on timely issues and on-the-ground experiences. This facilitated, discussion-based session emphasizes shared learning, idea exchange, and collaborative reflection in an informal setting.

7:30 AM - 8:30 AM - BREAKFAST BUFFET

Regatta Pavilion

Sponsored by St. Ann's Home and School

7:30 AM - 3:00 PM - REGISTRATION

Regatta Pavilion

7:30 AM - 5:00 PM - EXHIBITS

Regatta Pavilion

8:30 AM - 10:00 AM - KEYNOTE:

Regatta Pavilion

My Struggle Is My Strength - I'm Just a Kid with an IEP

Jordan Toma

Sponsored by Sheppard Pratt

Welcome to The Jordan Toma Experience! Jordan Toma is a top motivational speaker in the country because he teaches by example, his example. Diagnosed with ADHD, dyslexia and dysgraphia, Jordan struggled in elementary school through high school missing countless days of school and never passing a test on his own. Despite those difficulties, Jordan turned things around during a "Step Ahead" (pre-college) program and graduated from Centenary University with a 3.3 GPA and a degree in psychology. Three years later, Jordan spoke with students in the same pre-college program he attended after 12th grade. Jordan's first job was selling windows door-to-door and he became the number one window salesman in the country. Why? "Everyone else was walking; I was running." Today, Jordan is a successful businessman, a top insurance agent, and investment advisor with a multimillion-dollar real estate portfolio who speaks in schools and at corporate events across the country. Jordan will explain how to find strength through struggles and how important it is for leaders in education to help their students and teams believe in themselves.



CONFERENCE AGENDA

MONDAY, JANUARY 19TH

10:00 AM - 10:30 AM - COFFEE BREAK

Regatta Pavilion

Sponsored by ScenicView Academy

Enjoy a cup of coffee and visit with our exhibitors.

10:30 AM - 12:00 PM - CONCURRENT SESSION:

Bayview I

Leadership is the Strategy

Jenny Livelli

Sponsored by Phillips Programs

Directors and administrators in special education programs often face high staff turnover and burnout. Building strong leaders helps fix those problems. Good leadership supports teachers, improves the school climate, and leads to better outcomes for students. This session gives leaders a plan they can use to grow talent from within their own teams. It is made for leaders who want to build a stronger staff and improve the future of their programs. When staff feel supported and know how to lead, they are more likely to stay. They also do better work. Jenny Livelli, CEO of The Children's Guild, will share how her team created leadership programs for people at all levels. She will explain how they use coaching, feedback, and planning to help staff grow.

10:30 AM - 12:00 PM - CONCURRENT SESSION:

Bayview II

Interprofessional Collaboration to Support Individuals with Profound Autism: Examples of Successes and Recommendations for Practitioners

Willow Hozella, Morgan Levy, Rachel Flaherty

The complex needs of individuals with profound autism often require support from multiple clinical disciplines (Matson & Burns, 2019). While disciplines often deliver services independently, better outcomes may be achieved when disciplines work collaboratively, with each specialty sharing and receiving expertise and guidance from the other (Bowman, et al., 2021; LaFrance et al., 2019). A recent survey found that while individuals from different disciplines strongly desire to work together, they report that their experiences have been less than satisfactory (Bowman, et al., 2024). This presentation will focus on examples of successful collaboration between speech-language pathology, occupational therapy, and behavior analysis. The panel will describe successful collaboration and specific interpersonal and interprofessional strategies that facilitated effective collaboration, and how to overcome some of its known barriers.

10:30 AM - 12:00 PM - CONCURRENT SESSION:

Bayview III

The Nonprofit Board & CEO/ED Relationship: How to Make it Work Well

Ken Berger & Jyothish Daniel

Sponsored by Spectrum360

The workshop explores the complex relationship between nonprofit boards — composed of volunteers with limited time and backgrounds — and the full-time CEO/ED who manages day-to-day operations. It examines how boards can exercise oversight without overreaching into management, how executives can provide sufficient but not overwhelming information, and how to foster open dialogue that allows for healthy disagreement. The session will also discuss how the dynamic changes during crises and will feature the CEO/ED and a board trustee from Spectrum360 sharing candid examples and actionable recommendations for building a strong, collaborative board-executive partnership built on trust and mutual respect.

CONFERENCE AGENDA

MONDAY, JANUARY 19TH

12:15 PM - 1:30 PM

Regatta Pavillion

STATE OF THE ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEETING & FEDERAL UPDATE

Sponsored by Sheppard Pratt

Lunch provided.

2:00 PM - 3:30 PM

Bayview I

NCASES 101: INTRODUCTION TO ACCREDITATION

Discover how the National Commission for the Accreditation of Special Education Services (NCASES) provides a national accreditation process tailored for private special education and adult service programs. Learn how accreditation can strengthen your program, celebrate your unique practices, and ensure the highest quality of services. Commissioners will share an overview of the process and benefits and will answer your questions.

2:00 PM - 3:30 PM - CONCURRENT SESSION:

Bayview II

Hot-Button Legal Issues Affecting Private Special Education Schools

David B. Rubin, Esq.

Private special education programs are governed by a complex web of federal and state laws and regulations. In this litigious environment, it is essential for school leaders to recognize potential legal issues before they blossom into full-blown crises. This session will review developments in the law over the past year of interest to the private school community and offer tips on how to minimize risk and avoid liability.

2:00 PM - 3:30 PM - CONCURRENT SESSION:

Bayview III

Extreme Makeover: School Edition

Michael Farrelly and Tracy Lee

Sponsored by Marketing Business Solutions

Want to build a new school culture but do not know where to start? Thinking of remodeling your approach towards instruction and skill development? Well, we have some solutions for you! As current research evolves so must our mindset towards organizational outcomes. Presenters will share a detailed process used to further fulfill our organization's mission with impactful practices across special education services. Come learn the importance of balancing horizontal and vertical decision making and how active listening can be a missing tool in the rebuilding process. Attendees will learn hands-on strategies that result in revamped and cohesive special education teams, strengthened administrator- staff relations, improved student outcomes and highly satisfied families and community stakeholders.

3:30 PM - 4:30 PM - EXHIBITOR HAPPY HOUR

Regatta Pavilion

Join our conference exhibitors for a signature cocktail, a bite to eat, and another invaluable NAPSEC networking opportunity!

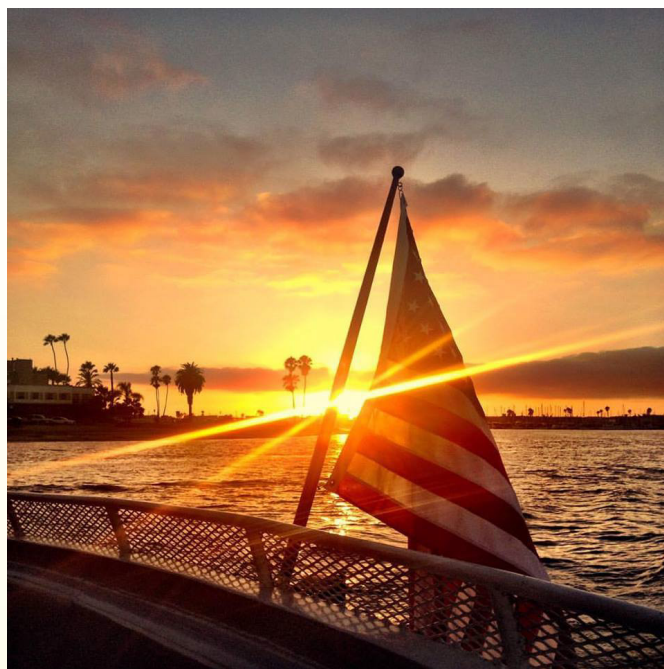


CONFERENCE AGENDA

MONDAY, JANUARY 19TH

3:30 PM - 4:30 PM - NCASES STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MARINER POINT



4:30 PM - 7:00 PM - FOUNDATION SUNSET CRUISE

Support the NAPSEC Foundation while experiencing Mission Bay like never before. This sunset cruise offers a relaxing escape on the calm waters of one of San Diego's most beautiful lagoons, aboard a vessel designed for comfort and unobstructed views.

Unwind on The Ohana as the sky transforms into brilliant sunset hues over the Pacific, creating a stunning backdrop for an unforgettable evening on the water. Guests will enjoy curated bites and an open bar throughout the cruise. This event is hosted by Marketing Business Solutions, with food and beverage provided by our generous supporting sponsors, United Agencies Inc. Insurance, Eden Autism, Select Savvy, Nisivoccia, and Johnson, Kendall & Johnson. All proceeds benefit the NAPSEC Foundation. Join us for an evening of connection, purpose, and Golden Hour on Mission Bay. Space is limited! Waiver required for participation. Cost is \$100 per ticket. Scan the QR code to purchase!

Guest Check-In Time (Hyatt Dock): 4:30PM

Boarding Time: 4:45PM

Cruise: 5PM-7PM



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**Our residential programs
provide students with:**

Access
Community
Opportunity
Independence
Growth
Belonging



Perkins
SCHOOL
FOR THE
BLIND



CONFERENCE AGENDA

TUESDAY, JANUARY 20TH

7:30 AM - 8:15 AM - BREAKFAST ROUNDTABLE:

Crown Point

Adult Services

Join fellow adult service providers for an informal breakfast roundtable featuring a facilitated, open discussion on shared challenges, emerging issues, and practical solutions in the field. This conversational session is designed to encourage peer exchange, candid insights, and collaborative problem-solving in a relaxed setting.

7:30 AM - 8:30 AM - BREAKFAST BUFFET

Regatta Pavilion

Sponsored by The Benedictine School

8:00 AM - 8:30 AM - WAKE UP WITH WELLNESS

Mariner Point

Discover Calm & Connection in 30 Minutes

Dr. Danielle Taylor

Step into a restorative 30-minute journey where you'll practice multisensory strategies—gentle movement, breathwork, meditation, and sound bathing—that invite calm, connection, and clarity. Together, we'll explore how the nervous system shapes our emotions, stress responses, and ability to connect with others.

Through this experiential session, you will:

- **Discover** how fight/flight, freeze, and social engagement states show up in the body and lived experience.
- **Connect** with the felt sense of emotions and stress in safe, guided ways.
- **Release** stored stress responses while cultivating presence and regulation.

By the end, you'll leave with tools to better regulate your own nervous system—so you can show up with more balance, resilience, and availability to co-regulate with students and colleagues, creating safer and more supportive learning environments.



CONFERENCE AGENDA

TUESDAY, JANUARY 20TH

8:30 AM - 10:00 AM - KEYNOTE:

Regatta Pavilion

Pass or Fail? The AI Vibe Check for Education Leaders

Rebecca Bultsma

Sponsored by Kennedy Krieger School Programs

What if AI could be your secret weapon instead of your biggest headache?

Most special education leaders are stuck debating whether AI is safe to try, while some programs are already using it to revolutionize compliance documentation and individualized planning. The difference? They know how to make confident decisions about what's worth their time. Practical AI strategist and AI ethics researcher Rebecca Bultsma brings you the cutting-edge intel that'll change how you think about leading in the age of artificial intelligence. Through compelling examples of what's working (and honest talk about what's not), you'll see how thoughtful AI adoption can amplify your impact and free up your team for what matters most. You'll learn a simple decision-making V.I.B.E. check framework that works whether you're an AI skeptic or a ChatGPT convert. We'll tackle the real risks — bias, data protection, that pesky tendency to make stuff up — not because you should be afraid, but because understanding the landscape lets you navigate it boldly. Walk out energized and ready to lead your organization into the future with confidence — because the AI revolution is happening with or without you, and you're exactly the leader your community needs to guide it wisely.

10:00 AM - 10:30 AM - COFFEE BREAK

Regatta Pavilion

Sponsored by The New Jersey Association of Special Education Partner Schools (NJASEPS)

10:30 AM - 12:00 PM - CONCURRENT SESSION:

Bayview I

Hot-Button Legal Issues Affecting Private Special Education Schools

David B. Rubin, Esq.

Private special education programs are governed by a complex web of federal and state laws and regulations. In this litigious environment, it is essential for school leaders to recognize potential legal issues before they blossom into full-blown crises. This session will review developments in the law over the past year of interest to the private school community and offer tips on how to minimize risk and avoid liability.

10:30 AM - 12:00 PM - CONCURRENT SESSION:

Bayview II

The AI Vibe Check in Action: From Policy to Practice

Rebecca Bultsma

Time to get hands-on with the tools that can actually solve your daily headaches.

Bring your laptop and real challenges — streamlining compliance documentation, supporting overwhelmed staff, making sense of complex legislation, improving parent communication — and let's find AI solutions that actually work. In this interactive workshop, we'll test-drive vetted tools together, working through scenarios from your own programs. You'll collaborate with fellow administrators to tackle practical questions: Which AI tools can safely handle your most time-consuming tasks? How do you train staff without creating chaos? What's worth your limited time and budget? We'll put tools through the V.I.B.E. test with real examples and see what passes. You'll leave with a curated toolkit of tested solutions, simple guidelines for staff adoption, and confidence in what to try first when you get back. Plus, you'll know exactly which tools to skip and why — because not every shiny new AI thing is worth your attention.



CONFERENCE AGENDA

TUESDAY, JANUARY 20TH

10:30 AM - 12:00 PM - CONCURRENT SESSION:

Bayview III

Leading from the Front Lines: The Supervisor's Role in Employee Experience

Jen M. Renault & Emily Riley

Sponsored by Phillips Programs

Our employees on the front line serving our students, members, and families need supervisors, who are equipped with the tools to provide authentic and effective guidance, care, and leadership. Supervisors, a key part of the employee experience, are often the defining factor of a person's job satisfaction. Through interactive discussion, supervisors, leaders, and administrators will walk away from this session with easy, inexpensive, daily actions supervisors can take that will have significant impact on employee engagement. Creating a stable and healthy work force is critical to ensuring our students and members thrive in our programs.

12:00 PM - 3:30 PM - SPOTLIGHT ON OUR MEMBERS:

Mariner Point

Stop by our dedicated media room to share your organization's story! NAPSEC is featuring members on our official social media channels, and this is your chance to highlight your program and tell us about your experience with NAPSEC. Interviews will be conducted by our media team, Marketing Business Solutions. All interviews will be short, casual, and designed to showcase the diversity and strength of our community. Visit the conference website to reserve your 15-minute slot.

2:00 PM - 3:30 PM - NCASES VOLUNTEER SITE REVIEWER TRAINING

Bayview I

Help support our mission to promote excellence in special education. This session will train participants to be NCASES Site Reviewers. Once complete, participants will be eligible to apply to serve as Site Reviewers for NCASES site visits.

2:00 PM - 3:30 PM - CONCURRENT SESSION

Bayview II

Tracking & Improving Student Outcomes

Linda Myers, Ed.D.

Sponsored by The Children's Guild

Kennedy Krieger School Programs Outcomes pilot project developed a new electronic survey system to gather information about graduates' employment, education, independent living, agency support experiences, and their perceptions of how Kennedy Krieger Schools supported post-school outcomes. This presentation will provide an overview of survey development, results, and implications for future directions. The initiative has led to improved data practices and plans for broader implementation. Participants will be invited to join a discussion and/or the NAPSEC Outcomes Committee to explore the feasibility of a collaborative national outcomes tracking project for graduates from member programs.



CONFERENCE AGENDA

TUESDAY, JANUARY 20TH

2:00 PM - 3:30 PM - CONCURRENT SESSION:

Bayview III

The Nonprofit Board & CEO/ED Relationship: How to Make it Work Well

Ken Berger & Jyothish Daniel

Sponsored by Spectrum360

The workshop explores the complex relationship between nonprofit boards — composed of volunteers with limited time and backgrounds — and the full-time CEO/ED who manages day-to-day operations. It examines how boards can exercise oversight without overreaching into management, how executives can provide sufficient but not overwhelming information, and how to foster open dialogue that allows for healthy disagreement. The session will also discuss how the dynamic changes during crises and will feature the CEO/ED and a board trustee from Spectrum360 sharing candid examples and actionable recommendations for building a strong, collaborative board–executive partnership built on trust and mutual respect.

4:00 PM - 5:00 PM - NAPSEC PUBLIC POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING

Bayview I

Join fellow NAPSEC members for an engaging discussion on current policy priorities impacting private special education. This meeting will provide updates on NAPSEC's advocacy initiatives, review emerging policy issues, and offer members an opportunity to share insights from their own states. Open to all interested attendees who want to stay informed and involved in shaping the policies that affect our community.

5:00 PM - 6:00 PM - NCASES HAPPY HOUR

Sunset Terrace

Sponsored by Arrow Child and Family Ministries

Stop by at the end of the day to relax and learn more about NCASES. We encourage current site reviewers to attend so we can thank you for donating your time and expertise on behalf of NCASES.

Mark your calendars!

NAPSEC Legislative Day

May 18-19, 2026

Hyatt Regency Washington on Capitol Hill

400 New Jersey Avenue, NW • Washington, D.C. 20001 United States

Join us for an important day of advocacy at NAPSEC's 2026 Legislative Day in Washington, D.C.

NAPSEC provides everything you need – training, printed materials, networking opportunities and confirmed meetings with your elected representatives and congressional staff on Capitol Hill. Visit the NAPSEC website for more information – book your room today!



CONFERENCE AGENDA

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 21ST

7:30 AM - 8:30 AM - BREAKFAST ROUNDTABLE:

Crown Point

Workplace Safety

Sponsored by May Institute

Join colleagues for an informal breakfast roundtable focused on workplace safety, featuring a facilitated discussion on current risks, best practices, and practical strategies for protecting staff and those they serve.

7:30 AM - 8:30 AM - BREAKFAST ROUNDTABLE:

Mariner Point

NAPSEC Member Listening Session

Participate in a NAPSEC member listening session over breakfast, featuring a facilitated roundtable designed to hear directly from members about priorities, challenges, and emerging needs..

7:30 AM - 8:30 AM - BREAKFAST BUFFET

Regatta Pavilion

8:30 AM - 10:00 AM - KEYNOTE:

Regatta Pavilion

Take Action: Turning Adversity Into Accomplishments

Michael Bonner

Sponsored by Kennedy Krieger School Programs

In this transformative keynote, Michael Bonner explores the power of one decision and how it compounds over time to create lasting success. From literacy and AI to emotional intelligence and culture, he unpacks the systems and mindset shifts that drive real change. Through powerful examples—from the Wright brothers to personal moments of resilience—Michael challenges audiences to update their systems, embrace discomfort, and take action toward a better future. Whether in education, leadership, or personal growth, this speech will equip you with the strategies to turn adversity into accomplishments and redefine what's possible.

10:30 AM - 12:00 PM - CONCURRENT SESSION:

Bayview I

Tracking & Improving Student Outcomes

Linda Myers, Ed.D.

Sponsored by The Children's Guild

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CONFERENCE AGENDA

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 21ST

10:30 AM - 12:00 PM - CONCURRENT SESSION:

Bayview II

Extreme Makeover: School Edition

Michael Farrelly and Tracy Lee

Want to build a new school culture but do not know where to start? Thinking of remodeling your approach towards instruction and skill development? Tired of wasting countless, sleepless evenings wondering how to begin or who can assist with fixing the problem? Well, we have some solutions for you! Investing the time and resources to assess special education programs and services that result in positive culture change and innovative initiatives can seem daunting for some and invigorating for others. Nonetheless, it is essential for school leaders to systemically review program effectiveness to ensure that approaches and practices of the past do not go stale and lead to lack of student progress or employee burnout. As current research evolves so must our mindset towards organizational outcomes. Presenters will share a detailed process used to further fulfill our organization's mission with impactful practices across special education and related service disciplines. Come learn the importance of balancing horizontal and vertical decision making and how active listening can be a missing tool in the rebuilding process. Attendees will also learn hands-on strategies that result in revamped and cohesive special education teams, strengthened administrator and staff relations, improved student outcomes and highly satisfied families and community stakeholders.

10:30 AM - 12:00 PM - CONCURRENT SESSION:

Bayview III

Using AI in Education: Embracing Change and Overcoming Fear

Liz Wohlberg

This presentation invites school and clinical leaders to explore how artificial intelligence can be thoughtfully integrated into special education to reduce burnout, streamline documentation, and improve collaboration. Using relevant examples, ethical guidance, and live demonstrations of tools like Microsoft CoPilot, MagicSchool.ai, and Otter.ai, we'll show how AI can support, rather than replace, the work of educators, administrators, and related service providers. Attendees will leave with a clearer understanding of AI's role in special education and practical strategies for responsible, informed implementation tailored to their programs or practice.

12:15 PM - 1:30 PM - AWARDS LUNCHEON & FAREWELL

Regatta Pavilion

Sponsored by Sheppard Pratt

Celebrate excellence in the field of private special education and adult services at this inspiring annual tradition. During this special luncheon, we will honor the 2026 NAPSEC National Award recipients and recognize programs that have achieved NCASES accreditation this year. Join us as we spotlight the individuals and organizations whose dedication, innovation, and leadership are making a lasting impact. This is a conference highlight you won't want to miss!

2:00 PM - 3:00 PM - CONFERENCE COMMITTEE MEETING

Bayview III



CONFERENCE EXHIBITORS

Congruity HR

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By being partnered with the Congruity HR family of client companies, you get the buying power and support of a 14,000-employee company. Economies of scale help in areas like medical insurance, workers' compensation insurance, human resources support and compliance while getting access to a customizable HRIS payroll solution. We help many companies do more with less and also help them get on the same playing field as their largest competitors.

Partlow Insurance

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(540) 667-4980 • www.partlowinsurance.com



Partlow Insurance has provided tailored insurance services to NAPSEC members for over 40 years. Our knowledge of the insurance industry and experience with schools and agencies serving students requiring special education services uniquely qualify us to assess a school's need and evaluate the cost effectiveness of their insurance coverage.

Johnson, Kendall & Johnson

109 Pheasant Run • Newtown, PA 19148
(610) 390-3921 • jkj.com



Johnson, Kendall & Johnson (JKJ) is a leading independent insurance brokerage and risk management firm that has been providing customized employee benefit, retirement and commercial insurance solutions to the Nonprofit, Human Services & Special Education Industries for over three decades.

Select Savvy

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(470) 568-5166 • selectsavvy.com



SELECT SAVVY is a boutique search and staffing agency making hiring and job hunting straightforward and transparent. We partner with SELECT organizations to fill Education, Healthcare, and Office roles, always aiming for the perfect fit for candidates and clients. Our work is guided by four pillars:

- *People Before Profits
- *Relationally Driven
- *Transparent Hiring
- *Workforce Inclusivity

With an authentic, inclusive and SAVVY approach, we hire only the best talent for our school, healthcare, and office partners!

CONFERENCE EXHIBITORS

San Diego Center for Children

3002 Armstrong Street • San Diego, California, 92111
(760) 468-1751 • centerforchildren.org



San Diego Center for Children is the leading non-profit children's mental health care provider in our region. Our skilled and compassionate team is dedicated to improving the lives of children and families through nationally accredited mental health and educational programs, including a Residential Treatment and Non Public School. We provide a hopeful path for a better future for thousands of families every year; and we've been doing it since 1887. Last year we empowered the lives of 9953 youth and family members through our programs and services.

United Agencies Insurance Services

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Devereux

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Devereux is one of the nation's largest nonprofit organizations providing services, insight and leadership in the evolving field of behavioral healthcare.

Managed Business Solutions

960 MacArthur Blvd • Mahwah, NJ 07432
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Managed | Marketing Business Solutions is Making Business Simple through office technology and marketing services. MBS focuses on all communications in the modern office including: Documents, Voice, Data, Hardware and Managed IT. Through careful analysis of individual business infrastructures we provide comprehensive bundled services to streamline output management. Marketing Business Solutions (a division of MBS) is a modern, rapidly growing full-service marketing agency that helps businesses grow their brand by utilizing website design, social media, and much more.

Educator of the Year

Kelli Johnson, ScenicView Academy



Kelli Johnson is the Dean of Education at ScenicView Academy and has been a long time extraordinary teacher with over two decades of experience. Her instructional leadership, innovation, and unwavering commitment to students with special needs have transformed the teaching practices and educational outcomes at ScenicView Academy. Kelli is known for her professional warmth and her exceptional depth of knowledge in teaching strategies and instructional design. She is widely respected for her ability to individualize instruction, making complex concepts accessible through concrete tools, visual supports, and data-informed strategies.

Her classroom expertise is matched by her strength as a mentor: she regularly observes teachers, provides thoughtful and actionable feedback, and encourages continuous improvement—even when lessons are already strong. Under her guidance, educators grow more confident, reflective, and effective. Kelli's impact extends well beyond the classroom.

She has strengthened partnerships with universities to expand services and instructional opportunities, bringing additional resources and expertise to students who might not otherwise have access. These include ongoing research projects that benefit our students, such as AI-assisted social media supports, and innovative services such as Occupational Therapy that can enrich and enhance their time at ScenicView and their skills when they graduate. As Dean of Education, Kelli has played a pivotal role in unifying our academic programs into a cohesive, evidence-based Academy focused on meaningful skill development and student growth, and we are grateful every day that she chose to leave the public school system to come and work for an experimental program trying to pioneer learning for neurodivergent adults.

Approachable, curious, dependable, brilliant, and deeply invested in both staff and students, Kelli exemplifies the very best of educational leadership—combining expertise, innovation, and heart to help learners and educators alike reach their full potential.





Related Service Provider of the Year

Deb Hamilton, ScenicView Academy



Deb Hamilton is one of those staff that students and their parents fall in love with and greatly appreciate because of her exceptional services delivered in such a warm and caring manner. Deb is a Nationally Certified School Nurse whose clinical excellence, innovation, and compassion have profoundly strengthened the health, independence, and well-being of hundreds of neurodivergent young adults at ScenicView Academy. As an RN with over 30 years of professional experience in a wide variety of settings, Deb brings deep medical expertise paired with an extraordinary ability to teach students how to understand, manage, and advocate for their own health. More than this, however, Deb is an invaluable part of the ScenicView team, whose warmth and wisdom enhances the lives of everyone who interacts with her. Deb is known for adapting her interventions in real time to meet students' individual needs. She continually evaluates and refines her practice, researches emerging medical interventions, and applies evidence-based strategies to ensure students receive the highest quality care.

She incorporates incentive programs, individualized teaching, and animal-assisted care by bringing her therapy dog, Gizmo, to campus weekly. This approach reduces anxiety, builds rapport, and creates a welcoming space where students feel comfortable seeking care and asking questions. Students who once avoided medical appointments now engage confidently and consistently because of Deb's approach.

Deb's impact reaches far beyond the nurse's office. She collaborates closely with students, families, educators, residential staff, and medical providers, ensuring continuity of care across settings. She attends frequent team meetings, shares insights proactively, and provides calm, trusted guidance in both routine and urgent situations—even outside scheduled hours.

Deb has partnered with foundations, community organizations and local universities to help students access essential services including a dental clinic at ScenicView, and epi-pen resources and trainings. In all she does, her genuine love for others has shaped a culture of trust and empowerment. Deb exemplifies the very best of related services—combining skill, innovation, and heart to help students stay healthy, grow confident, and prepare for independent living.



★ Direct Care Worker of the Year

Caitlin White, ScenicView Academy



Caitlin White is an art instructor and mentor at ScenicView Academy. Teaching students to express themselves through art is the medium through which Caitlin has influenced many individuals. Caitlin's boundless creativity, compassion, and commitment have had a profound impact on autistic and neurodivergent young adults at ScenicView Academy over her eight years of service. Through innovative, person-centered instruction, she creates empowering experiences for our students that foster confidence, self-expression, and personal growth.

As an art instructor and mentor, Caitlin teaches across a wide range of creative disciplines, including painting, mixed media, digital art, creative writing, and musical theater. She continually expands her skills to better meet students' individual needs and sensory profiles. Her Hero's Journey class is a standout innovation, using art as a tool for self-exploration and helping students see themselves as capable, resilient, and growing toward independence as the sole author of their life's story.

Caitlin's exceptional care is evident in her patient, calm, and strengths-based approach. She allows students to move at their own pace while offering consistent encouragement and genuine praise. Students who struggle to engage elsewhere reliably show up and thrive in her classes, where they feel safe, valued, and understood. She frequently goes above and beyond—using her own time and talents to support student performances, celebrations, and confidence-building moments.

Beyond her classroom, Caitlin is a trusted and generous teammate who strengthens the entire school community. She collaborates closely with therapists and staff, supports major events and fundraisers, and is known for stepping in during high-pressure moments with creativity and grace. Her professionalism, teamwork, and kindness make her a role model for colleagues and a cornerstone of ScenicView's culture.

Caitlin exemplifies the very best of direct care—combining skill, compassion, and dedication to help students and her school community thrive.

This award was generously sponsored by The Family Foundation.



NCASES

National Commission for the Accreditation of Special Education Services

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NCASES

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"The NCASES accreditation process provides an opportunity for program review by colleagues who are leaders in the field of special education. Their perspectives, affirmations, and considerations provide essential feedback promoting integrity and growth."

Patrick Seay, Assistant Vice President School ACT Operations
Kennedy Krieger School Programs

"This rigorous process drives excellence, ensuring agencies provide top-tier services and support to those they serve, ultimately leading to better outcomes and stronger trust amongst all stakeholders."

Ray Damm, Chief Executive Officer
ACCEL & ACCEL International

"NCASES has helped us to achieve and maintain high standards of quality with both our operations and the services we offer."

Marty Matheson, Executive Director
ScenicView Academy

WHAT SETS NCASES APART?

- **Created by Special Educators for Special Educators**
- A comprehensive self-study process evaluating 52 national standards
- An on-site peer review led by trained professionals who understand your work
- An approach that supports program uniqueness while ensuring excellence and adherence to established national best practices
- Recognized by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security & Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) as an approved accrediting agency for elementary and secondary schools

ABOUT US

- Established in 1992 by the National Association of Private Special Education Centers
- Overseen by a Board of Directors and managed by a volunteer Commission composed of experts in the field

Our mission is to ensure special education programs and services maintain excellence through demonstrable adherence to a set of established national standards

WHY CHOOSE NCASES?

Stand out as a leader in special education.

NCASES accreditation is a prestigious mark of quality, awarded through a rigorous peer review process specifically tailored for special education and adult learning programs. It provides:

- National recognition for excellence in special education services
- Validated adherence to best practices and professional standards
- Increased credibility with families, funders, and referral sources
- A structured path to continuous improvement and strategic growth

AUTHENTICITY OF PRACTICE

Seeing your program in action allows reviewers to validate what has been reported in your self-study is being implemented with fidelity and impact.

HOLISTIC EVALUATION

A site visit captures the full environment: classroom interactions, staff engagement, facilities, student support systems, and organizational culture - elements that can't be fully conveyed through documentation alone.

PEER-TO-PEER INSIGHT

Conducted by experienced professionals in special education, the review fosters meaningful dialogue, expert feedback, and the sharing of best practices tailored to your specific setting.

SUPPORT FOR GROWTH & IMPROVEMENT

Beyond compliance, site reviewers often identify opportunities for improvement and innovation, helping programs refine their practices and achieve even greater impact.



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CONFERENCE SPEAKERS



Jordan Toma

Jordan Toma is a top motivational speaker in the country because he teaches by example, his example. Diagnosed with ADHD, dyslexia and dysgraphia, Jordan struggled in elementary school through high school missing countless days of school and never passing a test on his own. Despite those difficulties, Jordan turned things around during a "Step Ahead" (pre-college) program and graduated from Centenary University with a 3.3 GPA and a degree in psychology. Three years later, Jordan spoke with students in the same pre-college program he attended after 12th grade. Jordan's first job was selling windows door-to-door and he became the number one window salesman in the country. Why? "Everyone else was walking; I was running." Today, Jordan is a successful businessman, a top insurance agent, and investment advisor with a multimillion-dollar real estate portfolio who speaks in schools and at corporate events across the country.



Rebecca Bultsma

Rebecca Bultsma is an internationally renowned keynote speaker and trainer who has worked with thousands of educators and leaders across Canada and the U.S. to build confidence and capacity for integrating AI in K-12 schools. Known for making AI approachable, practical, and people-centered, Rebecca helps educators harness AI to transform teaching, learning, and leadership while keeping relationships, equity, and ethics at the forefront. Rebecca partners with schools, districts, nonprofits, and businesses to advance AI literacy, develop responsible AI policies, and ensure ethical AI adoption that benefits students and communities. She serves as the Chief Innovation Officer of Amplify & Elevate Innovation and co-hosts AmpED to 11 Podcast, a podcast exploring how AI and innovation are reshaping education and the future of learning. Rebecca also contributes to Canada's Digital Governance Standards Institute and is advancing her research in Artificial Intelligence Ethics at the University of Edinburgh.



David B. Rubin, Esq.

David B. Rubin, Esq., is a sole practitioner in Metuchen, New Jersey and of counsel to The Busch Law Group, LLC. A graduate of Duke University and Rutgers Law School, Mr. Rubin represents public school districts and private schools throughout New Jersey. He has served as Chair of the National School Boards Association's Council of School Attorneys, and President of the New Jersey Association of School Attorneys, and is co-author of *The Ethical Educator: Pointers and Pitfalls for School Administrators* (Rowman & Littlefield 2022). Mr. Rubin has attained an AV rating from the Martindale-Hubbell legal directory, is listed in SuperLawyers Magazine and Best Lawyers in America, and is a frequent author and lecturer in the fields of education law and legal ethics.



Tracy Lee

Tracy Lee is a member of the administrative team at the Gramon Family of Schools in Fairfield, NJ. Tracy leads many innovative initiatives to advocate for students, families, staff and community stakeholders in the special education arena. She is also charged with guiding the organization's growth and improvement plans. Tracy is the Board President of the Alliance of Private Education Schools in North Jersey and is an active member of New Jersey's ASAH Region I. In her personal time, you can find Tracy playing tennis, spending time at the beach and enjoying time with her family.

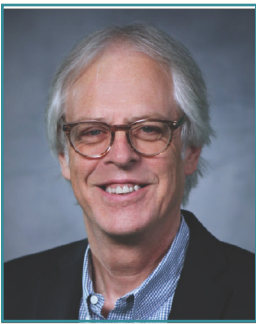


CONFERENCE SPEAKERS



Michael Farrelly

Michael Farrelly is a Director at the Gramon Family of Schools (GFS) in Fairfield, NJ. Over the past 25+ years, Michael has also held many other positions in Special Education including principal, teacher, transition coordinator, supervisor, and vice principal. Michael is an Executive Board Member of ASAH and the Chair of ASAH's Communication and Outreach Committee. Michael has presented at numerous professional conferences on various topics in special education and leadership at the regional and national levels. Michael is well-known for his extraordinary storytelling skills and ability to motivate others to make a difference in the world.



Ken Berger

Ken Berger is a nonprofit executive with more than 40 years of experience leading mission-driven organizations through transformational growth, strategic change, and complex governance challenges. Currently CEO of Spectrum360 and former CEO of Charity Navigator, Ken has built a career uniting boards and executives around shared vision, transparency, and measurable impact. He has worked extensively with nonprofit boards as both a leader and governance chair, and today serves as President of the NAPSEC Board as well as on several other nonprofit boards. Ken is also co-host of The Nonprofit Fix podcast, where he brings candid, research-informed insights on leadership and board dynamics. His work continues to focus on strengthening CEO–Board partnerships to foster accountability, collaboration, and long-term organizational success.



Jyothish Daniel

Jyothish Daniel has over 30 years of executive experience in general management, operations, organizational design, and strategic management consulting in turnaround, as well as startup / scale-up rapid growth settings. Through his firm Sindan Consulting, Jyothish leverages over three decades of management experience to provide Business, Strategic and Operational consulting services directly to C-suite clients that are leading organizations/firms in both the profit and not-for-profit sectors. Areas of particular expertise include New Market entry, Organizational Development, HR Systems, Manufacturing Operations, Industrial Operations & Services, Renewable Energy and Climate Resilience. Prior to his consulting work Jyothish led the turnaround and ultimate successful sale of Portadam, an infrastructure services firm to a PE-Backed acquirer. Prior to that he held leadership positions with The Conti Group, Blinds-to-Go, General Motors, and Mackie Automotive. Jyothish holds a Bachelor of Applied Science (Mechanical Engineering) from the University of Waterloo, and a Master of Business Administration degree from the Harvard Business School.



Liz Wohlberg

Liz Wohlberg is Manager of Physical Therapy Services for Kennedy Krieger School Programs and Senior Outpatient Physical Therapist in KKI's Infant Neurodevelopment Center in Baltimore, Maryland. With over 25 years of experience in pediatric and school-based physical therapy, Liz emphasizes compassion, communication, and collaboration to support children with complex needs. She is passionate about improving the lives of children and their families and embraces innovation, including AI tools, to enhance teamwork, reduce burnout, and streamline service delivery, ultimately creating more time for those she serves. In addition to her clinical role in the school programs, she is currently pursuing a Master of Education in Learning Design and Technology at Johns Hopkins University. She enrolled in the program to deepen her expertise in designing inclusive, technology-enhanced learning experiences that support learners and students with diverse needs. Her goal is to integrate evidence-based instructional design and innovative tools into professional trainings, clinical services, and academic environments, ensuring equitable access and engagement for all learners.

CONFERENCE SPEAKERS



Emily Riley

Emily Riley has dedicated over two decades to Arrow Child & Family Ministries, devoting the majority of her career to advancing quality improvement initiatives. As Chief Administrative Officer, she champions collaboration and connection, overseeing teams that lead change management strategies aligning with the agency's mission, elevating the employee experience, and strengthening organizational culture. With 20 years of leadership experience, Emily is deeply passionate about creating a vibrant and supportive workplace, one that actively engages, develops, and celebrates the organization's most valuable resource - its people.



Jennifer Renault

Jennifer Renault is a leader in human services with over two decades of experience in special education, child welfare, and nonprofit management. She currently serves as Senior Vice President of Maryland Operations for Arrow Child & Family Ministries, overseeing treatment foster care, residential, community-based, and special education programs. Jennifer is deeply committed to building values-driven workplace cultures that prioritize employee engagement, servant leadership, and excellence in service to children and families. Jennifer holds dual master's degrees in Clinical Psychology (Towson University) and Education (Loyola University Maryland). She is SHRM-SCP certified and a licensed educator in Maryland. She serves on several Boards, including NAPSEC and NCASES.



Jenny Livelli

Jenny Livelli is the President and CEO of The Children's Guild, a nonprofit serving children and families through schools and behavioral health programs in Maryland and Washington, D.C. With more than 25 years of experience in special education and human services, she is passionate about growing strong leaders and improving outcomes for students with complex needs. Under her leadership, the organization has expanded access to services, launched a leadership development program, and strengthened its culture. She previously served as Chief Operating Officer and Director of Continuous Quality Improvement before being named CEO in 2021. Jenny is active with the Maryland State Department of Education, MANSEF, the Alliance for Strong Families and Communities, and NAPSEC. She holds advanced degrees and certifications in education, including credentials in crisis intervention and behavioral supports.



Morgan Levy

Dr. Morgan Levy is an occupational therapist at the May Institute whose credentials include Certified Autism Specialist and Trauma Informed Educator. She holds a bachelor's degree in Applied Behavioral Science with a focus on autism intervention from the University of Kansas and a Doctor of Occupational Therapy from the MGH Institute of Health Professions. Dr. Levy's graduate research focused on the collaboration between occupational therapy and applied behavior analysis (ABA), community-based sensory strategies, and training interdisciplinary teams on sensory strategy implementation. Her current research explores using school-provided lunches as a means to improve food exploration for picky eaters with profound autism. Previous projects and presentations have delved into the role of occupational therapy in profound autism and addressing sensory-related factors in the treatment of self-injury



CONFERENCE SPEAKERS



Willow Hozella

As the senior director of clinical standards, Dr. Hozella is responsible for the overall delivery and integration of behavior analytic services into learning and behavioral programming within every program setting at May Institute. This includes supervising and coaching to support the development and implementation of universal and individual programming within an Applied Behavior Analytic (ABA) framework.



Rachel Flaherty

Rachel Flaherty is the Director of Rehabilitation Services at the May Center School in Randolph, Massachusetts. Rachel first joined the May Center in February of 2016. She worked as a Speech-Language Pathologist for several years before taking over managerial duties for the Allied Health team and eventually being named director. She also works per diem as an Assistive Technology Evaluator, providing screenings, evaluations, and recommendations for implementing technology in the homes of adults with disabilities. Rachel earned her bachelor's degree in Psychology and dual certification in special and childhood education at Marist College in Poughkeepsie, New York. She received a master's degree in Communication Sciences and Disorders from The College of Saint Rose in Albany, New York.



Danielle Damm

Danielle Damm has served as Executive Director and CEO of NAPSEC since 2018. She leads the organization's advocacy efforts in shaping public policy to positively impact individuals served in member programs while supporting the growth of a collaborative membership network of nonpublic special education and adult service programs. Danielle is a government relations professional and former congressional staffer with a decade of experience working with elected officials and private sector clients in Washington, DC. She has counseled heads of state and cabinet-level officials and has played a leadership role in directing influential advocacy campaigns for education, human rights, and global health issues.



Linda A. Myers, Ed.D.

Dr. Myers is a Vice President of School Programs for the Kennedy Krieger Institute. She holds faculty positions as an assistant professor in the School of Education at the Johns Hopkins University (JHU), and with the Wendy Klag Center for Autism and Developmental Disabilities at the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health. Dr. Myers holds a master's and a doctoral degree in Special Education and School Administration from the Johns Hopkins University. She has over 30 years of experience in the field of special education with expertise in autism spectrum disorders (ASD). She is the immediate Past President of NAPSEC and a former member of the Board of Directors for the Maryland Association of Nonpublic Special Education Centers (MANSEF).

CONFERENCE SPEAKERS



Dr. Danielle Taylor

Dr. Danielle Taylor, Psy.D is a licensed psychologist and a nationally certified school psychologist who has worked in public and private schools and clinical settings across the Northeast. She currently serves as the Chief Operating Officer at Spectrum360, a non-profit that serves people with Autism or who identify as Autistic and as a Psychologist and practice owner at Sacred Journeys Therapy, LLC.



Michael Bonner

Michael Bonner is a renowned leader, innovator, and performance booster, who is a trailblazer in leadership development and organizational culture. He is a dynamic keynote speaker as seen on The Ellen Show, NBC Nightly News, and Time for Kids and a recent recipient of Atlanta's 40 under 40 awards. He is the CEO of Bonnerville, a business that promotes the value of self-care and a highly respected team member at the famed Ron Clark Academy. He empowers leaders to build genuine relationships and establish a positive organizational culture, vision and team development. His seminars challenge listeners to reflect, strategize, and execute in order to increase their efficiency in the workplace and personal areas. He empowers listeners to build genuine relationships with their teams and colleagues because, "You cannot demand a withdrawal from someone you have never invested in." Michael Bonner's transformative approach leaves C-suite and nonprofit leaders, educators, and administrators confident and prepared to become world-changing citizens who garner significant impact. To learn more about Michael Bonner, visit michael-bonner.com and follow him on all social media platforms at @michaelbonner



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As we remember the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. this week, NAPSEC thanks you for granting us the opportunity to support you in your dedicated service to individuals with disabilities.

Monday, Jan. 19, 2026

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR

Jan. 15, 1929 - April 4, 1968



“Life’s most persistent and urgent question is, ‘What are you doing for others?’”

–MLK, Jr.



NAPSEC

National Association of Private Special Education Centers

CONFERENCE NOTES





Devereux is a proud sponsor of the 2026 NAPSEC Annual Leadership Conference

ABOUT DEVEREUX

Devereux's education services support schools around early learning, academic interventions, safety practices, and the assessment and treatment of students with complex behaviors, cognitive challenges and an emphasis on assisting school systems with special education and communication needs.

For more than a century, Devereux has been guided by a simple and enduring mission:
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