

Tom Watkins

Tom Watkins is Michigan Superintendent of Public Instruction. His diverse background includes leadership roles in the for-profit, nonprofit, and public sectors.

Watkins started his professional career with Youth Living Services, Inc. (now Starfish Human Services), where he established Counterpoint, a shelter that provided emergency housing for troubled youth and counseling for their families.

While serving as acting executive director of Wayne (mental health) Center (1980–81) and as a management consultant with Plante and Moran (1981–82), Watkins was elected to serve on the Wayne County Charter Commission. Members of that commission created the County Executive form of governance that exists today. In 1982, he served as deputy campaign manager in Governor Blanchard's first successful gubernatorial campaign.

In 1983, Governor Blanchard named Watkins as his deputy chief of staff. Soon thereafter, he was appointed deputy director of administration in Michigan's Department of Mental Health. He served as chief deputy director of that department from 1984 to 1986, and in 1987, he was appointed department director. Working with David Adamany as special assistant to the president for public school initiatives at Wayne State University (1991–96), Watkins played a key role in creating Michigan's first charter school.

From 1996 to 2001, Watkins served as president and CEO of the Economic Council of Palm Beach County, Florida, a coalition of 135 top CEOs dedicated to improving the quality of life for Palm Beach County residents and businesses. Concurrently, he served as executive director of the Education Partnership of Palm Beach County from 1996 to 1999.

Watkins received a bachelor's degree in criminal justice from Michigan State University and a master's degree in social work administration from Wayne State University. Currently, he is completing requirements in the doctoral program in education administration at Wayne State University.