

## Who Me? Why Should I Submit a Proposal for the 2010 NCFR Conference?

Are you nervous when you think about submitting a proposal for the NCFR Annual Conference? Presenting a paper at the 2010 Conference can be a step toward becoming more involved in NCFR. It is a way to advance your career and get to know leaders in the family field. It is good to have conference presentations on your resume, and in many cases, presenting at a professional conference can help you as you renew your professional licenses.

NCFR Sections are the bread and butter of conferences, and these sessions are built from the proposals that are submitted. If you wonder why a particular topic has not been addressed at a Conference, the reason is that we probably haven't received any submissions on that topic! If you have done work on a topic, don't hesitate, submit a proposal. It is important to submit, because allocations for concurrent sessions for the various Sections are based on the number of submissions they received. If a Section has just a few proposals submitted, very few sessions concurrent sessions will be allocated to them. Many educational institutions provide travel funds only to those presenting at a conference. Therefore, it is important for you to submit a proposal.

All proposals are blind reviewed by seasoned professionals; and every proposal has the same chance for acceptance. If you are hesitant about submitting one by yourself, ask a colleague to work with you on a project, and submit it jointly. If your proposal is accepted and you present at the conference, you will be recognized by your peers. Leaders in the family field may be in the audience. You will receive feedback on your work that will help you learn about your strengths and weaknesses as you advance in your career!

If you have hesitated to submit a proposal in past years, I encourage you to give it a try this year. You will find that it can be one of the most rewarding experiences of your career. If by chance your proposal doesn't get accepted this year, you can learn from the process, and the feedback will aid you as you prepare for the following year.

### Helpful Tips in Submitting a Proposal.

- ◆ Go to NCFR's Website: <http://www.ncfr.org/conf/current/annual.asp>. Click on the Call for Proposals section (left side bar). Printed instructions are available there. A copy of the Call instructions and application are in the conference registration packets, and will also be included in this December issue of the **NCFR Report**. If you have questions about program content, contact **Ramona Faith Oswald**, 2010 Conference Chair ([roswald@illinois.edu](mailto:roswald@illinois.edu)) or if you have questions about the online process contact **Cindy Winter**, ([cindywinter@ncfr.org](mailto:cindywinter@ncfr.org)). It is also helpful to ask your colleagues who have submitted before, or contact the Section chairs as listed in the Call for Proposals instruction kit.
- ◆ Determine the title, clear program objectives and target audience prior to submitting the proposal. Give it a simple and straightforward title: Fancy and clever titles or descriptions make it harder for reviewers and attendees to figure out what you're really talking about
- ◆ Identify all speakers and co-speakers and gather biography materials prior to submitting the proposal. You will need this information to key into the database. Note: With the exception of a symposium or workshop proposal, do not list the author(s) names and employers on the title page or refer to the author(s) names within the text. Blind review means that the reviewers judge proposals on standardized criteria without knowing the authors' identities.
- ◆ Be authentic! Your peers need "real-world" scenarios they can use. Please submit original presentation ideas that focus on knowledge transfer, and engaging and relevant examples.
- ◆ Include as much detail about the planned presentation as possible. The more we know about what you plan to present and why it matters, the better.
- ◆ Context is important. If your presentation is about something truly ground-breaking, earth-shattering, and new, it will be helpful to the reviewers if you describe it in terms of things that attendees might already know.
- ◆ Present something relevant. If you're presenting a new way to do something that others have been doing for a decade or more, you need an angle on it that's fresh or an explanation for why it's important now. The hot things are hot, the cold things are cold, but there are interesting problems in almost everything. One of your

challenges as a proposer is to demonstrate that you understand that attendees might need an extra reason to pay attention to something that they might otherwise think of as "settled"

- ◆ Avoid taking a scatter-shot approach to proposals if you submit more than one or two. Be focused, have something important to say on a worthwhile topic, and sell the topic (not just yourself)
- ◆ If you are planning a symposium or workshop, be thorough! Explain how the papers fit together, and list all the presenters and co-authors and their employers who are in the presentation.
- ◆ If you prepare a proposal that can lend itself to several types of formats and are willing to present in any format, you may have a better chance of acceptance. NCFR considers all formats to be equal in merit. We strive to offer a balanced program using many formats, yet over 60% of the people who submit list "papers" as their first choice. Papers account for only 35% of our program: Some authors will need to present in alternative formats, or be rejected because of space limitations.
- ◆ **One feature on the proposal application is to prepare 1-3 measurable learner objectives.** NCFR is an approved CEU provider for the National Association of Social Workers, National Board for Certified Counselors, NCFR Certified Family Life Educators and other organizations. One of the requirements from some of these agencies is that all proposals must contain clear **learner** objectives. Learner objectives are different from a short abstract. These must state what you want the audience to learn from listening to your proposal. These objectives are evaluated by the attendees as part of the requirements for receiving continuing education credits.