

## REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

<b>Symposium Date:</b>	February 5, 2027
<b>RFP Release:</b>	May 22, 2026
<b>Submission Deadline:</b>	August 1, 2026
<b>Notification:</b>	September 15, 2026
<b>Final Materials Due:</b>	January 15, 2027
<b>Contact:</b>	Heather Quilici - <a href="mailto:hquilici@csuchico.edu">hquilici@csuchico.edu</a>

### 1. Overview

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The Northern California Neurodiversity & Disability Symposium at Chico State is a community gathering of neurodivergent and disabled individuals, parents, caregivers, educators, clinicians, researchers, and advocates. Now entering its tenth year, the Symposium has grown from a regional autism-focused event into a broad, neuroaffirming space that centers the expertise of disabled and neurodivergent people while also serving the professionals, families, and communities that surround them.

We invite proposals that reflect the following commitments:

- Center and honor the expertise of neurodivergent and disabled individuals — including as presenters, panelists, and co-creators of knowledge
- Ground content in evidence-based practices and current research
- Bridge research and real-world application in ways that are practical and community-relevant
- Promote equity, accessibility, and a strengths-based, neuroaffirming perspective
- Welcome and serve families, educators, clinicians, and community members at all levels of experience

We welcome submissions from neurodivergent and disabled individuals, researchers, clinicians, educators (K-12 and higher education), parents and caregivers, community advocates, and cross-sector collaborators. Submissions at all career stages are encouraged.

## 2. A Note on Lived Experience

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Presenters with lived experience as a neurodivergent or disabled person are strongly encouraged to submit in any category — not only sessions explicitly framed around personal narrative.

Lived experience is a form of expertise. A researcher who is autistic, a clinician with a disability, a parent who is also neurodivergent, an educator who uses AAC — these perspectives strengthen every category of the symposium and reflect the Chico State NDS community at its best.

Please indicate in your submission whether any presenter identifies as neurodivergent and/or disabled. This information supports our programming goals and is not used to exclude any proposal.

## 3. Presentation Categories

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Please select the primary category that best describes your proposal. Proposals may touch on multiple categories; select the one that fits best. Creative, arts-based, and multimodal approaches are welcome within any category — we have a strong history of documentary screenings, zine-making workshops, and filmmaking programs that live comfortably across these areas.

1	<b>Lived Experience &amp; Self-Advocacy</b> Presentations by neurodivergent and/or disabled individuals sharing their own perspectives on identity, self-determination, diagnosis (including late diagnosis), navigating systems, community, and what authentic inclusion looks and feels like from the inside. Presenters with lived experience are strongly encouraged to submit in any category — not only this one.
2	<b>Evidence-Based Practices &amp; Clinical Interventions</b> Research-grounded sessions on assessment, intervention strategies, and clinical tools for supporting neurodivergent and disabled individuals. Topics may include social skills programs (e.g., PEERS®), sensory processing, communication supports, behavioral approaches, and translating research into practice.
3	<b>Education, Inclusion &amp; Learning Environments</b> Sessions for K–12 and higher education educators and administrators focused on inclusive classrooms, neuroaffirming pedagogy, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), IEP navigation, college transition and success, teacher-student interactions, and building belonging on campuses. Student panels and educator-student collaborative presentations are especially welcome.

4	<b>Family, Caregiving &amp; the Lifespan</b> Sessions for parents, caregivers, and families navigating diagnosis, early intervention, transition to adulthood, life after 18, accessing services and systems (including Social Security, regional centers, housing), and long-term planning across the lifespan.
5	<b>Community, Employment &amp; Independence</b> Sessions on vocational preparation, neurodiverse workplaces, supported and competitive employment, independent living, self-determination programs, physical and social wellbeing, and community integration and belonging.

## 4. Topics of Interest

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Within the five categories above, we especially welcome proposals addressing:

- Self-advocacy, identity, disability, and late diagnosis across the lifespan
- Neurodiversity, intersectionality, disability justice, and policy advocacy
- Evidence-based and community-informed practices, including autistic-led and participatory research
- Inclusive education, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), IEPs, transitions, and post-secondary success
- Mental health, relationships, sexuality, and social connection
- Employment, workplace inclusion, independent living, housing, and self-determination
- Family systems, caregiving, and navigating services and supports
- Physical health, motor skills, sensory processing, and accessible environments
- Arts, creative expression, and disability culture

## 5. Submission Formats

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All sessions are 60 minutes in length (approximately 45 minutes of presentation, 15 minutes of audience Q&A). We welcome the following formats:

- Individual Presentations: Individual Presentations
- Panels: Panels — 3 to 5 speakers recommended; virtual panelists can be accommodated
- Workshops: Workshops — interactive and skill-based sessions

Please indicate your preferred format in your submission.

## 6. Submission Requirements

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All proposals must include:

- Title of Proposal
- Primary Category (select one from Section 3)
- Session Description — up to 500 words, including session structure and goals
- Learning Objectives / Key Takeaways — 2 to 4 bullet points
- Proposed Format
- Target Audience — e.g., parents/caregivers, K-12 educators, higher education professionals, clinicians, neurodivergent/disabled individuals, general community, or multiple
- Presenter Information — name, affiliation, and a short bio (approximately 100 words per presenter)
- Accessibility Considerations — how will your session be inclusive and accessible to participants?
- Technical / AV Needs (if applicable)

## 7. Evaluation Criteria

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Proposals will be reviewed by a program committee and evaluated on:

<b>Relevance</b>	Alignment with the symposium’s neuroaffirming, disability-centered values and the selected category
<b>Evidence-Based</b>	Grounding in research, science, or evidence-based practices, or clearly articulated experiential expertise
<b>Clarity &amp; Quality</b>	Clear, well-organized proposal with realistic goals and structure
<b>Practical Impact</b>	Applicability and usefulness for the intended audience
<b>Lived Experience</b>	Inclusion of neurodivergent and/or disabled presenters or co-presenters
<b>Diverse Perspectives</b>	Representation of underrepresented communities and intersectional identities
<b>Audience Fit</b>	Appropriateness for the symposium’s mixed community of families, educators, professionals, and disabled/neurodivergent attendees

## 8. Accessibility & Inclusion Commitment

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The Symposium is committed to full accessibility for all participants.

- Accepted presenters are expected to use accessible practices, including plain language, captioned slides or materials, and image descriptions where appropriate.
- Event-level accommodations (e.g., ASL interpretation, real-time captioning) will be provided.
- Please indicate any accessibility needs or requests for your session in your submission.
- Virtual presentation options are available for panelists when needed.

## 9. Presenter Information

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Accepted presenters will receive:

- A stipend that includes travel costs. The symposium will cover two nights of hotel; remaining travel costs (airfare, ground transportation, meals) are expected to be covered from the stipend.
- Stipends generally range from \$1,500 to \$4,000 depending on presenter location and experience. If selected, you will receive your specific stipend offer and may make a personal decision about whether it works for you.
- Selected presenters will be expected to complete standard paperwork for tax purposes.

Presenters are expected to:

- Register for the symposium (at no cost)
- Submit all required materials by the stated deadline
- Adhere to the symposium's accessibility guidelines

## 10. Submission Process

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The [form to submit your proposal](#) is available until August 1, 2026. Participants will be notified if they are selected by September 15, 2026.

Questions? Contact Heather Quilici - [hquilici@csuchico.edu](mailto:hquilici@csuchico.edu)

## 11. Additional Notes

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- We welcome submissions from individuals at all career stages, including graduate students, community practitioners, and independent advocates.
- Co-presented and cross-sector proposals are encouraged.
- Proposals that bridge research and lived experience, or that bring together professional and community voices, are especially valued.
- We value respectful, neuroaffirming, and community-centered dialogue in all sessions.