

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Symposium Date:	February 5, 2027
RFP Release:	May 22, 2026
Submission Deadline:	August 1, 2026
Notification:	September 15, 2026
Final Materials Due:	January 15, 2027
Contact:	Heather Quilici - hquilici@csuchico.edu

1. Overview

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

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

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	Lived Experience & Self-Advocacy 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	Evidence-Based Practices & Clinical Interventions 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	Education, Inclusion & Learning Environments 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	Family, Caregiving & the Lifespan 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	Community, Employment & Independence 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

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

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

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

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

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

8. Accessibility & Inclusion Commitment

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

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

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

11. Additional Notes

- 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.