

Call for Proposals - CWLA 2027 National Conference, *Shaping Child Welfare's Next Chapter through Innovation and Resilience*

Across the country, the child welfare policy landscape is shifting, new technologies are emerging, workforce dynamics are evolving, and communities are navigating lost resources amid growing human needs. These transitions create new and difficult challenges for communities. They also present an unprecedented opportunity to reimagine the future of child welfare with intention, creativity, and purpose.

The theme of CWLA's 2027 Conference, *Shaping Child Welfare's Next Chapter through Innovation and Resilience*, is rooted in the belief that moments of transition can become moments of transformation. The question before us is not only how to navigate change, but how to use it—to build on the field's strengths, reconsider long-held approaches, and create better pathways for children and families to flourish.

The next chapter of child welfare cannot be defined simply by adding programs to the existing patchwork of services or layering new requirements onto existing systems. Meaningful change requires us to work with lived and professional experts to examine the way the work itself is done. It calls on us to rethink frontline case practice and supervision, and rework organizations to better mitigate the emotional stressors experienced by workers and the children and families they serve. We must also lead the way in ethically leveraging knowledge, innovation, and technology, and reimagine policies and programs that provide children, youth, and families with the supports they need when and where they need them. It requires us to ask not only what services we provide, but how we provide them, who is empowered to do the work, and what policies and resources are necessary for success.

CWLA is seeking workshop proposals that will help inform the field's next chapter. We welcome sessions that explore how innovation, workforce transformation, policy development, technology, and community partnerships can contribute to improve outcomes for children, youth, and families. We are especially interested in proposals that move beyond identifying challenges and focus on what comes next: new ideas, practical solutions, lessons from implementation, and opportunities for meaningful dialogue.

The opportunity before us will not wait. Whether your work takes place at the local, state, Tribal, or national level, we invite you to be part of that conversation.

Proposal Topics and Requirements

CWLA is now accepting proposal submissions for our 2027 National Conference, *Shaping Child Welfare's Next Chapter through Innovation and Resilience*, which will be held April 5-7, 2027, at the Crystal Gateway Marriott in Arlington, VA.

CWLA is seeking workshop presentations (90-minutes in length) that feature evidence-informed and evidence-based programs, practices, and strategies that drive significant progress in the well-being of children and families.

Presentation topic areas include:

Policy Approaches and System Partnerships

- Federal and state-level policy approaches that have preserved or expanded access to basic needs, child abuse and neglect prevention and intervention services, and health care services
- Lessons learned from the implementation of the Families First Prevention Services Act and strategies for achieving A Home for Every Child
- Partnerships across systems, states/counties, and within communities that have successfully eradicated barriers to support and enhanced child and family well-being

Organizational Capacity and Strategic Operations

- Creative business and operational strategies for overcoming funding and budgetary challenges, including aligning organizational strengths with strategic funding opportunities
- Successful applications of research, evaluation, data, and CQI in programs and organizations
- Effective and ethical uses of technology, artificial intelligence, and digital tools to strengthen practice, reduce administrative burden, and address equity concerns
- Innovative approaches to service delivery, particularly with strategies and lessons that speak directly to and can be implemented by frontline staff members
- Effective methods of recruiting and supporting a robust workforce, including skill building for supervisors/leadership development, and addressing secondary trauma, moral injury, and compassion fatigue, including for resource parents and parent advocates

Equity, Inclusion, and Population-Specific Practice

- Successful strategies to understand and promote equity, cultural humility, and strong racial, cultural, and ethnic identity
- Efforts to improve services for specific populations, including immigrants, LGBTQ+

children and resource parents, Latino families, and families in rural areas

- Strategies to support children and parents with disabilities, including efforts to ensure equitable access to services and supports
- Promising practices and implementation strategies that strengthen compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), support partnerships with Tribal nations, and improve outcomes for American Indian and Alaska Native children, youth, and families

Health, Mental Health, and Community Safety

- Strategies for supporting children and families impacted by mental health or substance misuse, including residential treatment placements
- Successful efforts to expand access to mental health treatment for children, adolescents, and youth through Medicaid and other health systems
- Strategies to address the impact of increased exposure, or likelihood of exposure, to gun violence on child and adolescent populations

Family-Centered Services

- Efforts to rethink front-end services, including working differently with parents, families, and communities and improving the use of mandated reporters
- Effective strategies and practices that strengthen families, including:
 - o Prevention of and interventions for children coming into care
 - o Strategies for permanency, including reunification, kinship care, guardianship, and adoption
 - o Post-adoption supports and services
 - o Engaging resource parents and kinship caregivers in supporting children and their birth parents
 - o Addressing poverty and other social determinants of health, including responding to the concrete needs of children and families

Selection Criteria:

- Alignment with the topic areas
- Innovation and originality, including approaches from other systems that can be used in child welfare
- Ability to be replicated and adapted within other communities, systems, and practice areas
- Demonstrated leadership in advancing effective strategies, programs, and practices
- Engaging format, including budgeted time for facilitated conversation, breakout groups, activities, and use of handouts
- Preference will be given for proposals that include the voices of youth and families

with lived expertise or community partners as presenters or co-presenters

- Priority will be given to CWLA members

Requirements:

CWLA's will choose presentations using the selection criteria while ensuring a mix of speakers based on practice area, geography, and experience.

Selected presenters must agree to provide an electronic copy of any presentation materials and handouts no later than two weeks before the conference. Each workshop will receive 2 discounted presenter tickets. If a workshop has more than 2 presenters, additional presenters must register at the full rate.

The submission deadline is Friday, August 7, 2026.

Please use the form to provide information about your proposed workshop including details on presenters, intended topic area and audience, supporting evidence, and a summary.

Overview

2. Are you or your agency a member of CWLA? *

Mark only one oval.

Yes

No

Unsure

3. Please list the proposed title for your conference presentation in 15 words or less. *
(Be sure to use person-first language and clearly identify the topic area)

4. Please provide a summary of your presentation in 125 words or less. This description will be used in the Conference Program and read by conference attendees. (Be sure to use person-first language) *

5. Please provide an in-depth description of your presentation in 200 words or less, including objectives and proposed handouts. This description will be read by CWLA staff. *

Presenter Information

6. Name: *

7. Agency: *

8. Job title: *

9. City: *

10. State: *

11. Email address: *

12. Please provide a short bio for the presenter (*include relevant information to identify * expertise as it relates to the proposed presentation topic*).

13. CWLA recommends a **maximum of 3 presenters** per workshop due to room and time constraints. Do you have co-presenters for this workshop? *

Mark only one oval.

Yes

No *Skip to question 29*

Co-Presenter Information

14. Name: *

15. Agency: *

16. Job title: *

17. City: *

18. State: *

19. Email address: *

20. Please provide a short bio for the co-presenter. *

21. Is there an additional presenter? *

Mark only one oval.

Yes

No *Skip to question 29*

Additional Presenter Information

22. Name: *

23. Agency: *

24. Job title: *

25. City: *

26. State: *

27. Email address: *

28. Please provide a short bio for the additional presenter. *

Workshop Details

29. Please indicate the target audience for your presentation. *(Select all that apply)* *

Check all that apply.

Front line workers

Supervisors

Senior managers

CEOs / Agency Directors / Commissioners

Resource parents

Board members

Other: _____

30. How will your workshop format engage attendees and encourage audience participation? *

31. What actionable strategies from your presentation can attendees take back to their communities? *

32. Please detail how your session is centered around evidence-informed practices and/or supported by research. *

33. Please detail how your material includes input from people with lived expertise. *

34. Do you plan to visit your representatives on Capitol Hill during the conference? *

Mark only one oval.

Yes

No

I'm not sure

35. Have you presented at a CWLA conference in the past three years? *

Mark only one oval.

Yes

No

36. Have you presented on a similar topic at any other national, regional, or state conferences in the past three years? *

Mark only one oval.

Yes

No

37. Please detail where and when you presented on a similar topic (*if applicable*).
