



Powers and Duties of Reference Committees

National Conference of Constituency Leaders

Reference committees are created to facilitate the work of the NCCL. Instead of debating details and hearing all evidence for or against a resolution when it is submitted to the business session, it is referred by the NCCL Convener to the appropriate reference committee. The purpose of the committee is to develop a “pre-consensus” on each issue to be considered later by the full business session.

At a scheduled hearing, all persons interested in any particular proposal appear to present their views to the reference committee. Members of each constituency may attend portions of any reference committee hearing to represent the views of his/her constituency. Every pertinent point should be heard and considered by the reference committee. However, it is necessary to limit or avoid extraneous orations and purely personal or irrelevant views in order that the committee can devote full attention to the subject and complete its work in the brief time available.

The following guidelines describe the conduct of the hearings and the work of the reference committees.

CONDUCT OF REFERENCE COMMITTEE HEARINGS

1. Immediately following the published deadline for submitting resolutions, designated AAFP staff will meet to prepare the reference committee agendas. Agendas will be prepared by AAFP staff and available for distribution on Friday morning. All reference committee hearings will be held on Friday. The items on the agenda will be grouped in a logical manner and may be scheduled to place the more controversial items at a time less in conflict with another reference committee hearing being held simultaneously.
2. Members of the reference committee (one from each constituency and any named observers) should sit together at the table in the front of the room. The chair of the reference committee will conduct business from the podium.
3. The chair should call the meeting to order promptly at the time designated by the conference schedule.
4. There will be at least one floor microphone in each reference committee hearing. The chair should remind speakers to identify themselves by name, chapter, and constituency after being recognized.
5. *The Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure*, current edition, specifies the following: “The chair of the reference committee presides at the hearings and facilitates discussion. As far as possible, all who wish to speak should be heard and a few persons should not be permitted to monopolize the discussion. The committee may limit the length of time allowed each speaker. The chair cannot permit motions or votes at the hearing, since its objective is only to receive information and opinions; decisions of any sort during the hearing would hamper the reference committee in its private deliberations.”
6. Any AAFP member has the privilege of speaking at a reference committee hearing. The chair may also request nonmembers to provide needed information to clarify or present essential facts on an item under discussion. Otherwise, nonmembers will be granted the floor only upon permission of the reference committee chair. Requests from nonmembers wishing to testify should be made prior to the start of the reference committee hearing.

7. Discussion on any item may be reopened, if necessary, to obtain additional information from those not present when the original discussion took place.
8. It is not necessary that minutes be kept of a reference committee hearing. It is only necessary that the committee hear all the evidence to enable it to reach an informed decision and prepare its report. The Recording Secretary, assigned to each reference committee, should sit near the committee chair to assist in making notes of pertinent points which may serve as guidance in preparation of the final report. If a statement is made in the hearing which the chair wishes to incorporate in the report, it is proper before proceeding to ask that it be repeated to make certain the Recording Secretary has the information.
9. As soon as a reasonable opportunity has been afforded for all parties to express their views on a particular item of business, the chair should move quickly to the next item on the agenda.
10. News media reporters may be seated in the reference committee hearing. If testimony in open hearing reaches a point at which the chair deems it necessary to limit it from the standpoint of public relations, the chair should entertain a motion to go into Executive Session. Upon adoption of such motion, all persons except those invited by the committee may be excluded from the room. (This has never been necessary at any previous AAFP hearing.)

PREPARING THE REFERENCE COMMITTEE REPORT

11. The decisions to be reflected in the reference committee report are to be made in Executive Session. No one other than members of the committee, including any assigned observer(s), and assigned staff are to attend this Executive Session unless invited by the chair to provide needed information. The Speaker, Vice Speaker, and AAFP staff are available for consultation at the invitation of the reference committee chair. Based on testimony presented in the hearings and their own knowledge of the issues involved, without stifling constructive debate, the committee should strive as quickly as possible to handle each resolution referred to it by recommending:
 - (a) Adopt
 - (b) Not Adopt
 - (c) Adopt a Substitute Resolution
 - (d) Reaffirm as current policy, program, or service of the AAFP
12. If the recommendation is for adoption, or for adoption of a substitute, the reference committee may also recommend:
 - (a) Referral to the Congress of Delegates. Fully-developed proposals or policy statements may be forwarded from the conference directly to the Congress of Delegates, subject to final approval by the CMMS.
 - (b) Referral to the Board of Directors. Ideas or concerns which have not yet been fully developed should be forwarded from the conference to the Board of Directors. Such recommendations may be handled at the Board level, referred for consideration to a commission of the Board, or referred to the Executive Vice President.

The determination of whether to send a resolution to the Congress of Delegates or to the Board of Directors is a judgment call best decided with the input of the NCCL Convener, reference committee chair, and the AAFP staff persons assisting the reference committee. In general, a resolution should *not* be sent to the AAFP Congress of Delegates if it requires further study, if the background information supporting the resolved clause is insufficient, or if the reference committee is unsure if the requested action is already in place within the AAFP structure. For example, resolutions which call for the AAFP to adopt a policy statement should be checked against existing AAFP policies and clinical recommendations on the AAFP's website.

Whether a resolution is referred to the Congress of Delegates or the Board of Directors, a report summarizing the outcome of each resolution will be provided at the following year's NCCL.

It is the discretion of the Business Session to determine the relevance of the reference committee recommendation for referral destination; however, the CMMS has ultimate approval of any referrals to the Congress of Delegates using the following criteria:

1. Importance of topic/issue to membership – Is it relevant to many or only a few members?
2. Relevance of topic/issue to the AAFP's strategic objectives – Is there a direct connection between the recommended action and the AAFP's current priorities?
3. Nature and scope of the recommendation – Does it require action by the Congress of Delegates or is it better suited for discussion at the Board of Directors or commission level?
4. Degree to which issue/recommendation has been researched – Does the rationale/background reflect a thorough review of prior AAFP actions, positions, current programs, and services; acknowledgment of potential cost implications, etc.?

If the CMMS determines that a resolution should not be sent to the Congress of Delegates, it will, instead, refer the resolution to the Board of Directors.

13. Congress of Delegates and NCCL staff are available for consultation and will review all reports before they are finalized. It is important that the reports be completed as promptly as possible following the hearings. As soon as the reports are completed, they will be made available for all conference registrants.
14. The content of the reference committee report is the responsibility of the chair and the reference committee. After the reference committee has reached decisions on all agenda items, staff will assist with the format and preparation of the report. It is recommended that, on the basis of decisions reached by the committee, designated AAFP staff draft the reference committee report for the reference committee chair to review, approve, and sign off on. At an appropriately designated time, the report may also be reviewed by all other members of the committee, if so desired.

FORMAT FOR THE REFERENCE COMMITTEE REPORT

15. The reference committee report should be addressed to the chair of the Business Session. Each line of each page is to be numbered in sequence (each page to begin with Line 1).
16. Properly identify each item in the report. When considering a resolution, the resolved portion(s) only are to be copied in the report. After properly identifying the item, state the pertinent reason(s) for the action recommended and then specify recommended action. A statement of reason(s) for the action recommended is necessary and should be given particularly careful attention on controversial issues.
17. The order of items in the reference committee report may follow any order; however in instances where multiple items on the same subject are considered together, order of consideration of the items is determined by action recommended. Items are then presented in the following sequence: recommendation to adopt, recommendation to adopt a substitute, and then recommendation to not adopt.
18. In addition to the introductory and concluding paragraphs, only the following portions of the reference committee reports are to be underscored:
 - (a) Identification of the items
 - (b) Reference committee's recommended actions
 - (c) All substitute resolved clauses which are revised by the reference committee

19. It is customary for the reference committee chair, at the conclusion of the report, to thank members of the committee and all those who appeared to assist it in its deliberations. However, this is not a part of the official report.

PLACING THE ENTIRE REFERENCE COMMITTEE REPORT ON CONSENT CALENDAR

20. Once the reference committee report is completed, an index page listing the items from the report will be developed. This index page will represent the consent calendar and will be formatted so that it follows the report. For example, Item 1 from the report will be the first item on the consent calendar with Item 2 from the report as the second item on the consent calendar and so on until all items from the report are so indicated on the consent calendar. Based on the consent calendar, the reference committee report will be voted on in one vote by the Chapter Delegates; however, any item or items may be extracted for debate. These will be voted on separately.

PRESENTING THE REFERENCE COMMITTEE REPORT

21. In order to expedite the presentation and action on the reference committee reports, the entire report will be presented on a consent calendar and voted on in one vote unless item(s) are extracted. The extracted item(s) will then be debated and voted on separately. The entire report will not be read. Only the underscored portions will be read by the reference committee chair if extracted and requested by the Business Session Chair. For example, the reference committee chair will read the underscored portion(s) of extracted items and the Business Session Chair will then call for a vote on the recommendation. If discussion should ensue, the Business Session Chair will request the reference committee chair to read the testimony for the recommendation after the first individual has spoken and before discussion proceeds any further.