



Everything You Need to Know to Participate in the National Conference Congress Activities

National Conference of Family Medicine Residents and Medical Students – Kansas City, MO

How do you get the most out of the Congress? Be an ACTIVE participant in your congress!

The congresses are an exercise in informed decision making. By participating in your congress, you have the opportunity to identify key issues, gather important information, debate the pros and cons of proposed action, and influence the policies and positions of the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP).

Each year, the **National Congress of Family Medicine Residents and National Congress of Student Members** convene during the National Conference. Here's how your congress works:

Who can participate in the congresses?

Anyone registered for the National Conference can attend congress sessions. To speak to and vote on recommendations (resolutions) before your congress, you must be a resident or student member of the AAFP. To vote in elections, you must be a chapter delegate. Each constituent chapter sends one delegate to each congress.

What is the objective?

The resident and student congresses are the official AAFP voices of family medicine residents and medical students. Through these forums, resident and student members elect national officers and advocate for significant issues and causes. Many initiatives launched here are now AAFP policy.

When do the congresses meet?

Each congress holds three sessions – for a detailed schedule of all congress-related events, refer to the National Conference program book.

Where do the congresses meet?

To make it as easy as possible for conference attendees to participate in their congress and attend conference programming, the congresses meet at the convention center in Rooms 2103A (resident) and 2102 (student).

How are the meetings conducted?

To ensure that the congress sessions run fairly and efficiently, the congress chair follows the *American Institute of Parliamentarians Standard Code (AIPSC)*, current edition. In short, parliamentary procedure is a set of rules for working together to achieve effective group action. Among the congress materials, you will find a two-page fact sheet on parliamentary procedure, including a chart of general rules.

KEY ELEMENTS

The following six elements are key to the operation of your congress. Understanding these procedures/activities will help you plan your time effectively and ensure that you have opportunities to fully cultivate your leadership skills. For exact times of various activities, consult the congress schedule.

1) Discussion Groups

Attendees have the opportunity on Thursday afternoon to brainstorm about resolutions to bring before the congresses. This year, groups will focus on six broad topic areas: Advocacy, Continuing Professional Development, Education, Health of the Public and Science, Membership & Member Services, and Practice Enhancement. A resident leader and a student leader are assigned to each group to facilitate discussion. Resource materials, including past actions of the resident and student congresses and recent action of the AAFP Congress of Delegates, are provided to each group. As the group begins to share ideas and discuss issues, six key questions will be used to help determine what topics merit consideration as resolutions.

2) Resolution Writing

Resolutions submitted by resident and student members determine the nature of business in each congress. A resolution begins with an idea and becomes a recommendation for action or a statement of belief. A resolution may have a single author or several authors. A limited number of resolutions are accepted via an online portal during two time periods: Before National Conference (usually a few weeks prior) and during National Conference (online portal opens at 3:00 p.m. on Thursday of National Conference and closes at 6:00 p.m. (only the number of resolutions needed to meet the predetermined cap of submissions per congress will be forwarded to a reference committee.) Time is set aside on Thursday afternoon (during and following the discussion groups) for resolution writing. Find more information and rules about the Resolution Submission process online at <http://www.aafp.org/events/national-conference/congresses/resolutions.html>.

A resolution consists of two parts: *whereas clauses* – a series of statements that build the case for desired action and *resolved clause(s)* – a clear, concise recommendation(s). Research is the first step in developing a resolution. The Congress Business Office is equipped with printers, a limited number of computers and a variety of resources, including tips on resolution writing, resolution template, key reference materials, and access to the Internet. Members of the AAFP Board of Directors and current resident and student leaders will also be available to answer questions and provide assistance.

3) Reference Committee Hearings

Reference committees facilitate the work of the resident and student congresses. Instead of debating details and hearing all evidence for or against a resolution when it is initially submitted to the congress, it is referred to the appropriate reference committee. The role of the committee is to develop a 'pre-consensus' on each issue to be considered later by the full congress.

On Friday afternoon, the committees hear testimony on each of their resolutions. The author of a resolution is allowed to testify first. Then anyone with an interest in the resolution may offer input. Following the hearing, each reference committee convenes in executive session and discusses what was said and develops a report that includes a recommendation on each resolution. A reference committee will either recommend that a resolution (1) be adopted, (2) not be adopted, (3) offer a substitute resolution for adoption or (4) recommend the resolution be included on a reaffirmation calendar because it reflects current policy or is being addressed in existing programs and services. The reference committees present their reports during the final business session on Saturday. (Refer to #6 Consent Calendar.)

4) Chapter Caucuses

Your chapter delegate is encouraged to hold caucuses during National Conference. There are times designated on the congress schedule for this activity. Chapter caucuses provide an informal forum for exchanging ideas and opinions. They are used to solicit input regarding resolutions, candidates running for office, and other issues being addressed during the final business session of your congress.

To help you identify members from your chapter, your congress room will be set with state signs. Attendees are encouraged to sit with their delegations. If you don't know who your official delegate is, check the large roster sign outside your congress room at the delegate credentialing booth. If no one is listed for your chapter, offer to serve.

5) Candidates' Forum and Elections

Job descriptions and qualifications for elected positions are outlined on the AAFP website at <http://www.aafp.org/about/make-a-difference/leadership/students-residents.html>. Nominations are solicited during the Thursday and Friday congress sessions and immediately before the candidates' forum during the final congress session on Saturday. Candidates' photos and selected materials will be displayed starting Friday morning outside the resident and student congress rooms. This information will also be available on the AAFP webpage as well as through the National Conference mobile app.

During the candidates' forum on Saturday morning, nominees for the Board of Directors and National Conference Chair positions will each speak for three minutes. Nominees for other positions will each speak for two minutes. Candidates for selected positions will also have an opportunity to participate in a Q&A session. This segment of the forum is designed to give delegates and attendees a better idea of candidates' knowledge of the organization and viewpoints on important issues. The election process and order of elections are outlined in the congress rules of order.

6) Consent Calendar

Each reference committee report includes an index page, listing all items with the committee's recommendations. This is a consent calendar. Based on this consent calendar, reference committee reports are voted on in *one vote*. However, any item or items may be extracted for debate. If items are extracted, those items are voted on separately. After the consent calendar has been approved, minus any extractions, the reference committee chair presents each extracted item. The floor is then open for discussion of the resolution. Testimony for and against each resolution is heard. The reference committee chair reads the testimony from the report for each extracted item only after the first person has spoken for or against the item.

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