

REPORT OF THE PUBLIC POLICY METHODS COMMITTEE
October 1982

The Public Policy Methods Committee was charged with the task of recommending the process by which NCFR might respond to public policy issues. After obtaining the opinions of 34 other NCFR members to determine whether the committee members' views could be considered consistent with others, the committee began its task. First, it was agreed by the committee that NCFR should take stands on public policy issues. We then proceeded with a goal of providing for efficiency in a process that contained sufficient checks and balances. In addition, we have tried to avoid overburdening any one person or group with the full responsibility of the process. The following process is recommended:

1. Include a survey regarding specific policy-related issues in the December issue of the NCFR Newsletter each year. For each issue included, NCFR members will be asked to respond in terms of (a) the importance of the issue, (b) their view on the issue, and (c) whether or not NCFR should take a stand on the issue.
2. Preparation of the survey
During NCFR, the chairpersons of the Public Policy Committee and the Family Action Section, plus three members from each of these groups (members to be appointed by appropriate chairpersons) will meet to finalize which issues will be included in the survey. The Public Policy Committee will prepare the survey for inclusion in the Newsletter.
3. Completed surveys will be returned to the chairperson of the Public Policy Committee in order for responses to be tallied in preparation of a report for the NCFR Board of Directors.

In consultation with the chairperson of the Family Action Section, a report will be prepared for the NCFR Board in which specific issues are recommended for consideration during that year. The tallied responses will be presented with the recommendations.

4. Any stand on an issue should be based on survey results. However, it is also recommended that for issues on which NCFR will take a stand, a paper be developed. The paper will be a critical review of the evidence that supports the stand preferred by NCFR members and the evidence that does not support the stand of NCFR members.

5. The Board will commission an author to write the paper(s) and at the same time appoint three reviewers for each paper.
6. The paper will be sent to the chairperson of the Family Action Section upon completion. The chairperson will send the paper to the reviewers and receive the responses of reviewers. The reviews will be sent to the author to use in revising the paper. If any reviewer is not satisfied with the revised paper, that reviewer will be asked to write a formal response to the paper.
7. The paper and any formal responses and the reviews will be sent to the Board for review and approval. The Board can decide not to accept any paper for any reason, but it is recommended that the Board confine its approval or disapproval to reasons other than substantive, remembering that the Board commissioned author and reviewers on the basis of their expertise.
8. If approved by the Board, the paper will be sent to the Public Policy Committee.

The Public Policy Committee will extract material from the paper that can be used (because of format, and brevity) with legislators. The author of the paper will be consulted regarding the acceptability of the shortened paper.

9. If Congressional testimony is requested, either the author or a member of the Public Policy Committee will be asked to testify.
10. Journal editors will be encouraged to review the papers to consider publication. Publication will serve as an incentive for authors to do the extensive work involved in one of these papers. In addition, the papers can be expected (in final form) to be of high quality and of great relevance to family specialists.

This is the recommended process. A brief review of some aspects of the process may be helpful.

1. The NCFR members will have an opportunity to participate actively in the process.
2. As much emphasis is placed on providing information as on taking a stand. It is conceivable that a paper author would, after reviewing the evidence, advise the board to postpone taking a stand due to conflicting or non-compelling evidence.

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3. The Board of Directors has ultimate control over this kind of involvement of NCFR.
4. The Public Policy Committee and the Family Action Section, both comprising members with great interest on policy-related issues, are integrally involved throughout the process.
5. The survey results can be used by the Board for a quick response to a policy issue if necessary, but greater time is allowed for development of the paper.
6. There are enough checks and balances in the process to insure that the written material is ethically and intellectually acceptable.

Respectfully submitted by:

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Sharon Alexander
Jerri Hepworth
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Format for Position Papers:

INTRODUCTION--give rationale for addressing this issue by explaining its importance to families and NCFR

NCFR POSITION--stated briefly and clearly

RESEARCH FINDINGS--based on a critical review of the literature

1. Give findings which support our stand
2. Give findings which are contrary to our stand
3. Draw conclusions based on research cited, explaining why a particular stand has more validity than the other. Suggest areas of needed research.

RECOMMENDATIONS--Suggest possible action by policymakers, NCFR members, and/or the general public. If appropriate, mention pending legislation and recommend passage, defeat or modifications as needed.

Format for White Papers:

INTRODUCTION--as above

RESEARCH FINDINGS--based on a critical review of the literature

1. Report findings, including studies which have conflicting results, with possible explanations for these contradictions as appropriate.
2. Suggest areas of needed research before we have adequate knowledge to support or oppose a particular action.

CONCLUSION