

2017 BYLAWS PROPOSAL: POSITIONING THE PROFESSION FOR A STRONG FUTURE

On the 2017 ballot, members will be considering a bylaws recommendation from the Board of Directors that would position AAMFT to meet members' changing needs, be more efficient with members' money, and allow for necessary flexibility to advance and expand our vibrant profession.

In many ways, this proposal looks similar to the 2015 bylaws recommendation and the underlying reasons why it is important to support it remain the same:

- **Our association has a large percentage (over 35%!) of members who will likely be retiring in the next five years.** Even if all of our current students and pre-licensed professionals became Clinical Fellows, we would still lose up to a quarter of our current Clinical Fellows. By adopting a more flexible structure, we can ensure that we are still safely protecting the profession, our members are leading the efforts to expand it, and the things you love about AAMFT can still exist!
- **Our members have a lot of different interests.** While we were in the fight for licensure in all 50 states, a bulk of our work was being done on that effort at the various state levels and our members were hyper-focused and diligent. Now, as our profession moves into its next evolution, we are expanding the roles of MFTs in efforts such as public policy and academia; we are expanding the development of areas like medical family therapy and collaborative health care; and we are working in new environments such as agencies, organizational development, consulting, and more. As our profession grows, it is vital that we have a way to nurture and develop those member interests. A more flexible structure allows us to do this.
- **Advocacy needs our full-time attention.** Historically, AAMFT has asked a lot of division leadership – serve as association management specialists, run conferences, and networking, and lead the efforts in state advocacy. The victory in Texas was an important one for our profession. But the reality is that challenges like this are popping up all the time and it is vital we are prepared to tackle them early! By utilizing the Family TEAM, with sub-sets like Family TEAM-PA, we are ensuring that all our members interested in advocacy have a place to engage and strategize together. We are able to more effectively use our resources to support those activities. And, most importantly, we are better structuring ourselves to be focused on advocacy so when the next threat or opportunity emerges, we have dedicated leaders who are solely focused on advancing and protecting the profession.

Approval of this bylaws proposal eases the burden on members undergoing financial hardships and more closely aligns AAMFT with the costs of other mental health associations by eliminating our mandatory two-tiered dues structure. This change would also open up many more options for members to engage around. Your division leaders have been working with AAMFT to consider the opportunities the new bylaws would create and to determine what they would recommend to members for the future. These options include:

Option 1: Dissolving the Division and Focusing Solely on Advocacy

For some areas, they may be experiencing declining membership numbers, the leadership in the area may be tired from years of serving trying to do “everything”, or they may be a vibrant group that is really focused around one interest – advocacy. These groups will likely want to consider dissolving their division and, spend their energies on developing their sub-set of the Family TEAM and cultivating great advocates.



2017 BYLAWS PROPOSAL: POSITIONING THE PROFESSION FOR A STRONG FUTURE

If this option was recommended by the division board, and then accepted by the membership, the division would dissolve via the process dictated by its state laws and any remaining funds would be transferred to a dedicated account solely for advocacy expenses within that geographic area. Decisions on how those funds would be used would be determined by the Family TEAM leaders in that area.

Engagement activities that are likely to be conducted with local members might include fundraising events for unique advocacy efforts, legislative days at the State House, and advocacy training programs for new or emerging leaders.

Option 2: Creating an Interest Network

Interest Networks differ a little from the Special Interest Groups of the 2015 bylaws proposal. They are much more scalable meaning that groups can be larger and take on more activities, or much smaller/very focused and brought together around one goal. The keys to success are creating a very descriptive plan so members know exactly what they can expect when they join and developing a balanced budget annually that demonstrates responsible use of members' money.

Interest Networks are still lead by member volunteers, however there are only four required leadership positions so it eliminates the need for recruiting for a full governance board. Interest Networks are also part of a program within AAMFT instead of a separate and unique business entity. This removes a layer of risk and operational responsibility currently with divisions. It also sets AAMFT up to execute on what our profession does best – facilitate relationships and healthy systems. Because each Interest Network is a part of the larger program with its plans and outcomes are reviewed annually by a committee comprised of members-at-large, elected leaders, and staff, it creates the perfect chance to capitalize on opportunities. For example, a small Interest Network may want to include a new training as part of its annual plan however, lacks the funds to support an event. The Interest Network Committee can see this intention and then make recommendations to the leadership of this Interest Network to partner with another group with the facilities secured to host an event. The Networks can share the expenses and revenues, accomplish their goals, and be positioned to best benefit our members!

Option 3: Become an Independent Affiliate

Independent Affiliates would operate the most similar to our current division structure – they are separate legal entities, maintain full Boards and governance units and they focus on advocacy and networking where there are high concentrations of MFTs. Independent affiliates benefit from their relationship with AAMFT through shared branding and recruitment and retention efforts. Independent Affiliates submit an annual budget and work with AAMFT to market their membership benefits and events however, Independent Affiliates are entirely responsible for their operations beyond this. Their leadership oversees any necessary legal and best practice requirements for non-profits and associations in their state such as filing taxes and maintaining proper levels and types of insurance.

Because the aspects of running and supporting a business are additional requirements of Independent Affiliates, they are required to achieve minimum benchmarks of at least 350 members and have financial reserves that represent .70 of their annual operating budget (or have a plan to achieve this within five years). AAMFT will review affiliate relationships every two to three years to ensure the relationship is meeting members' needs and the benchmarks demonstrate sustainability.

Voting on this important proposed measure will be on this summer's ballot – mailed and available electronically starting in late June and closing on August 15. The challenges facing our association are pressing but with your support of this measure, we can ensure that AAMFT is proactively able to meet the needs for the future of our profession and its professionals!

