

Commonwealth Prevention Alliance

2027 PA Prevention Conference: Call for Presenters

The Commonwealth Prevention Alliance (CPA) invites presenters, experienced and new, to share their work at the 2027 PA Prevention Conference. We want sessions that give prevention professionals something valuable they can use, build on, or carry forward after the conference.

About 350 attendees join us in person and online: prevention specialists, coalition leaders, school staff, county administrators, higher education professionals, advocates, and others working across prevention. Nearly half have been in the field less than five years, so don't assume everyone already knows the basics. Many workshops are live-streamed so virtual attendees can take part.

Key Dates

Date	What happens
June 9-11, 2027	Conference, Penn Stater Hotel and Conference Center, State College, PA
October 13, 2026	Proposals open
January 8, 2027	Proposals due
February 12, 2027	Presenters notified
May 3, 2027, 10:00 a.m. ET	Speaker orientation call (required)
May 24, 2027, 10:00 a.m. ET	7x7 timing rehearsal (required)
June 1, 2027	Slides and materials due

New to Presenting? We Want to Hear From You.

Every year, we intentionally make room in the program for people who are new to the conference stage. You may have presented at a coalition meeting, parent night, staff training, community event, or webinar. That counts, and it's exactly where good conference presenters come from.

If this is your first or second time presenting at a conference, we strongly encourage you to submit a proposal.

Session Types

Type	Length	What it is
Keynote	60 minutes	A big-picture talk for the full conference. Keynote proposals are reviewed separately by CPA, and details are discussed directly with selected speakers.
Workshop	60, 75, or 90 minutes	An interactive breakout session that gives attendees something they can carry forward: a skill, a strategy, meaningful connections, or access to people they don't usually get to talk with.
7x7 (new!)	7 minutes, 7 slides	One sharp, forward-looking idea, delivered fast, on the main stage in front of the full conference.

New This Year: 7x7: Ideas Worth Trying

7 slides. 7 minutes. One big idea.

7x7 takes the place of one of our keynotes, so the whole conference is in the room. Four speakers each get 7 minutes and 7 slides. The slides advance automatically every minute, so there's no running long and no rushing the end. When the last speaker finishes, all four come back up for a joint Q&A with the audience.

It's fast, it's focused, and it's the best seat in the house for an idea you care about.

Why Submit a 7x7?

- **The main stage.** Your idea reaches every attendee, not one breakout room.
- **No full session to carry.** You need one strong idea, not 60 minutes of content.
- **Any background works.** You need an idea worth 7 minutes, not a big title or program behind you.

What Makes a Great 7x7 Talk

- **One idea.** If you need three points to make it, it's probably a workshop.
- **Forward-looking.** Where is prevention going, or what is the field about to get wrong?
- **Built for 7 minutes.** Not a workshop with the middle cut out.
- **Ideas worth trying:** a new way to look at an old problem, an unlikely partnership that worked, a challenge to how the field usually does things, or something prevention needs to be ready for next.

We'll help you get ready. All 7x7 speakers attend a timing rehearsal before the conference.

What Makes a Strong Workshop

Two things came through loud and clear in our 2026 evaluations: attendees want sessions with practical value, and too many good sessions ran out of time.

Plan for the Time You Have, Not the Content You Have

Presenters who rushed through the end of their material lost their audience. Final workshop lengths depend on the schedule, so:

- Build your core workshop so it works in 60 minutes, with room for attendees to take part.
- If your content doesn't fit, cut content rather than rushing through it.
- If you're scheduled for longer, use some of the extra time to deepen the experience, not just add more slides.

One attendee put it well: *"Cut 20 minutes of material, add 20 minutes of engagement, and people remember more of what's left."*

What Will Attendees Get?

Strong workshops deliver at least one of these. Your session doesn't need to hit all four, and most workshops are Skill or Strategy.

Outcome	What it looks like
Skill	Attendees practice something they can use right away: drafting a message, practicing a conversation, using a tool, or interpreting data.
Strategy	Attendees leave with a plan or approach for their own organization, county, school, or coalition, often by working through a real challenge from their own setting.
Connection	Attendees build relationships with peers doing similar work that last past the conference. This takes more than table introductions.
Access	Attendees get to talk with decision-makers, funders, researchers, or state leaders, not just hear from them.

Ideas for Engaging Attendees

Use what fits your session. More methods don't make a stronger proposal.

- **Skill practice:** role-play, draft, or run through a tool.
- **Apply it to your own work:** a real problem, plan, or next step from attendees' own settings.
- **Case study or scenario:** attendees work through an example you provide.
- **Small-group work or structured peer exchange:** a specific question or prompt that helps attendees learn from each other.
- **Demonstration:** you walk through a skill, process, or tool step by step.
- **Direct exchange with leaders or experts:** planned Q&A or discussion, not leftover time at the end.

Prevention That Works

Prevention sessions should reflect what the evidence tells us about effective prevention and avoid approaches shown to be ineffective or potentially harmful. CPA's What Works in Prevention toolkit lists approaches that don't work and can even backfire:

[Read the What Works in Prevention toolkit](#)

- Fear appeals and scare tactics
- Impairment goggles and DUI simulators
- Drug testing in schools
- Information-only approaches, assemblies, and one-time presentations
- Personal testimony from people in recovery as youth prevention
- Myth-busting campaigns

Sessions that promote these approaches won't be selected. Sessions that help people move away from them are welcome. The proposal will ask about this, so take a look before you apply.

Topic Areas

Choose up to 3. Pick the ones your session actually covers, not every topic it touches.

Area	Topics
Substance Use and Emerging Issues	Current Drug Trends · Gambling and Gaming · Opioid Settlement Funds
Programs and Practice	Evidence-Based and Evidence-Informed Programs · Innovative and Home-Grown Programs · School and Campus Prevention · Data and Evaluation · Prevention Research · Policy and Advocacy
Youth, Family, and Community	Youth and Young Adult Engagement · Family and Parent Engagement · Coalition Development · Social Media and Technology (including AI) · Communications and Storytelling
Wellbeing	Mental Health Promotion · Suicide Prevention · Mindfulness and Staff Wellbeing
Workforce and Organization	Leadership and Supervision · Professional Development and Ethics · Funding and Sustainability · Reaching Specific Populations · Other

What You'll Need to Submit

Have these ready before you start. The Proposal Coach will walk you through each one and help you tighten your answers. These items are the same whether you choose the coach-led process or complete the non-AI-assisted online form.

Everyone

- Name, credentials, title, organization, email, phone, city, and state
- Short bio, 100 words max: briefly tell us why you're the right person to present on this topic (credentials, experience, or your work in the field)
- Is this your first or second time presenting at a conference?
- Number of co-presenters, with name and email for each
- Session type: Keynote, Workshop, or 7x7
- Up to 3 topic areas
- **Does your session use or promote any of the approaches listed under "Strategies to Avoid" in the What Works in Prevention toolkit?** No / Yes or not sure (tell us how your session uses it)

Keynotes and Workshops

- Title, 12 words max
- Program description, 125 words max
- Experience level: **Beginner** (no prior knowledge needed), **General** (some familiarity helps), or **Advanced** (assumes experience with the topic)
- 3 learning objectives
- Does your session feature a product, curriculum, book, or toolkit that you or your organization sells or distributes? This includes free products. If so, what does it cost to implement?

Workshops Only

1. **What's the main thing attendees get from your session? Pick the one that best describes the experience you're designing: Skill, Strategy, Connection, or Access.**
2. **What will attendees do during your session?** A few sentences is plenty. Tell us what they'll practice, work on, discuss, or ask, not just what you'll cover.
3. **About how much time in a 60-minute session will attendees spend actively participating rather than listening to a presentation? This helps us understand your session design; more attendee time does not automatically make a proposal stronger.**
☐ Less than 10 minutes ☐ 10 to 20 ☐ 20 to 30 ☐ More than 30
4. **What will attendees leave with, and could they use it somewhere other than your organization or community?**
5. **What makes this session different from a basic presentation on this topic?**
6. **What length works best for your session?** All workshops should be able to run in 60 minutes if needed.
☐ 60 minutes ☐ 75 minutes ☐ 90 minutes ☐ Any of these works

Not sure how to answer? The Proposal Coach will help you work through it.

7x7 Only

- Title, 12 words max
- Your one idea, in a sentence or two. What do you want attendees to think differently about, try, or take back with them?
- Why now? Why does the field need to hear this?
- Short description for the program, 100 words max

Scheduling and Support (Everyone)

- **Are there any times you can't present?** ☐ Wednesday afternoon ☐ Thursday morning ☐ Thursday afternoon ☐ Friday morning ☐ I'm available for any of these
- **Are you willing to have your session live-streamed?** Our tech team handles everything. You just speak into the mic. Yes / No (tell us why)
- Will your organization cover any of your costs? Registration, travel, lodging, or none
- Are you requesting an honorarium? If so, how much?
- Any other requests

Writing Learning Objectives

Objectives describe what attendees will be able to **do** because they came to your session. They aren't a list of topics. Skip verbs like *know*, *understand*, *learn*, or *be aware of*. Use a verb that shows something attendees can actually do: compare, describe, identify, draft, map, write, adapt, apply, build, create, or use.

Weak	Strong
<i>Understand opioid settlement funding.</i>	<i>Identify at least two allowable prevention uses of opioid settlement funds in their county.</i>
<i>Learn about PAYS data.</i>	<i>Use their county's PAYS results to choose one risk or protective factor to focus on.</i>
<i>Be aware of new nicotine products.</i>	<i>Recognize five nicotine products currently marketed to youth.</i>
<i>Gain storytelling skills.</i>	<i>Write a 60-second story about their program's impact for a funder.</i>

If you write "understand," the Proposal Coach will ask what attendees will be able to do. That's on purpose.

Titles and Descriptions

Attendees pick from dozens of sessions, and many read only the title. One of the most common complaints in 2026 was a session that wasn't what its title and description promised.

Titles

- **Do:** keep it to one line (about 6 to 10 words), say what it is, promise something realistic, and name the tool or technique if there is one.
- **Don't:** get too cute, overload the colon, or promise more than you can deliver in the time you have.

	Example
<i>Scroll past</i>	<i>An Overview of Opioid Settlement Funding in Pennsylvania</i>
<i>Maybe</i>	<i>Using Opioid Settlement Funds for Prevention</i>
<i>I'm going</i>	<i>Getting Your Share: Settlement Dollars for Prevention</i>

Descriptions

- **Do:** name the problem, say why this session and why now, tell attendees what they'll gain, say who it's for, match your title, and use active voice.
- **Don't:** only give background, only tell your story or list credentials, repeat your objectives, or overpack it. If it lists more than you can realistically cover, reviewers will notice. So will attendees.

How Presenters Are Supported

CPA is a nonprofit, and we want to be upfront about how presenter support works. Each year, we set aside a limited pool of funds to support presenters. When a presenter's organization covers registration, travel, or lodging, that pool stretches further. It helps presenters who have no other way to attend and lets us bring high-quality speakers to the conference year after year.

If your organization can support your participation, we're grateful. If it can't, tell us what you need in your proposal. **Requests for support are considered separately from the review of your proposal. Asking for support does not lower your score.**

Good to Know

- **All presenters register for the conference.** This includes workshops and 7x7 presenters and co-presenters. Registration covers your meals and full access to the conference, and it helps us plan headcount, food, and space. Workshop and 7x7 presenters are responsible for conference registration unless registration support is approved. Presenter registration rates and support information will be provided with acceptance. Keynote registration is covered by CPA.
- **Co-presenters are welcome.** Tell us how many. CPA doesn't provide funding for co-presenters.
- **One session per person.** You can be listed as a presenter or co-presenter on one proposal only.
- **Many workshops are live-streamed.** We hope you'll say yes. Our tech team handles all the setup.
- **No-show policy.** If you're selected and can't make it, tell us as soon as you know. Presenters who don't show without notice won't be considered for the following year's conference.
- **Heavy content.** If your session covers trauma, suicide, or other heavy content, give attendees a brief heads-up at the start.

How Proposals Are Reviewed

The CPA Conference Committee reviews every proposal against six questions:

1. **Attendee value.** Is it clear what attendees will gain, and will the session activities get them there?
2. **Clear outcomes.** Are the objectives things attendees can do, not just understand?
3. **Transfer.** Can attendees use it beyond this presenter, program, or community?
4. **Fits the time.** Can the session be delivered well in 60 minutes without rushing?
5. **Accurate and relevant.** Do the title and description accurately represent a session that is useful to Pennsylvania prevention professionals right now?
6. **Effective prevention.** Does the session reflect what works in prevention and avoid the strategies listed in CPA's What Works in Prevention toolkit?

We also build a balanced program. A strong proposal may not be selected if several highly rated proposals cover the same topic.

Submitting Your Proposal

Use the Proposal Coach for a guided, conversational submission. It asks the questions and helps you tighten your answers. Allow about 30–45 minutes to prepare your proposal. An existing draft may take less time; additional presenters may take longer. You can save your progress and return later. You'll get a copy of your submission by email. You may also submit the online form without AI assistance.

If you're selected, a member of the CPA Conference Committee will contact you. Selected presenters sign a letter of agreement, send a headshot and short bio, and join a required virtual speaker orientation call. **Questions?** Contact Jeff Hanley at jeff.hanley@paprevention.org.