Ethical Standards and Practices for the PAIRS Provider

These standards of professionalism aim to assure the high quality and safety of PAIRS classes. We, as a community of providers, collaborate to create an efficient and effective experience for couples, singles, and youth regarding learning the dynamics of intimacy. PAIRS maintains this set of ethical guidelines for self-monitoring by providers to assure the quality and reputation of PAIRS as the best couple and relationship education, prevention, and intervention program available.

1. Introduction & Definitions

1.1. The following are based on ethical guidelines of the American Association for Marriage & Family Therapy, the American Psychiatric Association, the American Psychological Association and the National Association of Social Work.

1.2. The word ‘Provider’ as used in this document is to include all Licensed PAIRS Instructors, Leaders, Teachers, Trainers, and Trained Professionals, as well as their assistants and employees who are engaged in promoting, providing and researching PAIRS Programs.

1.3. PAIRS ethical standards are representative of the professions from which PAIRS Providers generally come. Each PAIRS Provider is a priori bound by the ethical standards of his or her own profession. PAIRS sets a minimum standard of conduct for its Providers as those standards generally established by professional boards in the helping professions.

1.4. A Provider is in a significant position of power by virtue of his or her role as someone who has expertise and teaches about intimate relationship skills. Participants often place their trust in the Provider and tend to look to the Provider to set professional guidelines regarding appropriate behavior. Participants who attend PAIRS frequently harbor major issues regarding trust and can have significant doubts whether sustaining intimacy is even a real possibility. Therefore, maintaining professional standards of behavior at all times is expected when interacting with PAIRS participants.

1.5 A PAIRS Provider creates a “safe haven” for exploration and learning. A Provider assures participants that the PAIRS learning environment is a safe place to explore intimacy and skill development and that the Provider is a safe and reliable guide.
through the process.

1.6. Ethical practice begins with the recognition that all of our actions, even seemingly insignificant ones, have a potential for harmful impact on participants. Shouldering that responsibility is a complex task that requires vigilance and ongoing dialogue. Providers are sensitive to prevailing community standards and to the possible impact of their public behavior upon the reputation of this program. Any questions about appropriate ethical behavior should be expressed directly from the Provider to your Project Manager and PAIRS Foundation.

2. Obligations of a PAIRS Provider

A PAIRS Provider will:

2.1. Provide a service of education about intimate relationships to a clientele of adults in a group setting or in a clinic setting, or to minors in a group setting with written permission of the minors’ legal guardians, or as part of an educational program taught through an accredited public or private school.

2.2. Have, and maintain, the qualifications stipulated in the PAIRS Licensing Agreement

2.3. Provide a clear description of what a PAIRS participant may expect in the way of services, fees and schedules by representing services and products fairly and accurately, avoiding guaranteed results or exaggerated claims of success. A Provider is guided by a primary obligation to aid participants in developing informed judgments, opinions and choices.

2.4. Keep information regarding a participant confidential. Keep within the bounds of the PAIRS group any information gained within the group. Keep confidential any information an individual PAIRS participant discloses to the Provider that has not been shared in the PAIRS class or workshop. Confidentiality must be taught, modeled and maintained in order to insure privacy and emotional safety for participants.

2.5. Use all records gathered in conjunction with class participation only for the purposes intended within the context of the PAIRS program.

2.6. Obtain written Informed Consent from each class participant, acknowledging his or her understanding of expected course content. Protect against pressuring or coercing a participant to participate in any exercise deemed unsuitable by the participant. PAIRS invites—it does not inflict.

2.7. Adhere, in teaching PAIRS programs, to the substance and content of the material contained in the PAIRS curriculums, training manuals and participants’ handbooks as published and periodically updated by PAIRS Foundation.

2.8. Conform to accepted standards for human research when collecting research
information regarding participants in PAIRS Programs.

2.9 Seek appropriate help outside of the PAIRS program classroom to resolve personal/relationship difficulties that might interfere with his or her ability to maintain the professional role as a Provider. Use professional judgment and discretion for assessing whether, at such times, the Provider can effectively carry out his/her responsibilities to participants and assistants. Professionals are required to refer patients/clients/students to other resources should they judge themselves incapable of meeting professional standards in the execution of their professional responsibilities.

3. Restrictions Upon PAIRS Providers

A PAIRS Provider will not:

3.1 Misrepresent qualifications, training or experience. Credentials must be explained to each class so that an atmosphere of professionalism is at the core of the PAIRS group.

3.2 Claim that the PAIRS course, seminar or workshop will save or end a marriage or other intimate relationships.

3.3 Misrepresent PAIRS classes, courses and workshops as group therapy in order to seek third party reimbursement. Providers will represent the PAIRS curricula as educational programs that teach knowledge and skills for enhancing relationships. Exception: PAIRS tools and concepts may be used explicitly (identifying them as PAIRS tools) by Providers, who are otherwise licensed mental health professionals, in their practice of psychotherapy, group therapy, or couple group therapy.

3.4 Advise a couple to separate, divorce or reunite. Each participant takes full responsibility to apply the learning contained within the course to his or her relationship and to make judicious, autonomous decisions based on the same. Decisions about relationships are solely in the hands of each participant.

3.5 Teach any part of the course while under the influence of alcohol or any other mind-altering drugs that would impair delivery of the PAIRS material.

3.6 Release mailing lists of PAIRS participants, or use such lists for any purposes not exclusively related to PAIRS, without the express permission of each participant.

3.7 Be involved in any interaction of a romantic, dating, or sexual nature with a participant.

3.8 Engage in dual relationships with participants unless there is a prior committed relationship that clearly preceded the start of the course. A participant can be a therapy client; however, the Provider is obligated to define their relationship by their therapeutic contract. Extra caution needs to be taken when considering a provider’s family members being participants in a PAIRS course, workshop or program.

3.9 Engage in non-professional meetings with participants outside of scheduled class times
other than appropriate social outings open to the entire class.

3.10 Engage in dual relationships with assistants helping to promote, teach or research PAIRS, or accept as an assistant in PAIRS anyone who is currently a client/patient or involved in other professional relationships that make the Assistant vulnerable to the power inherent with the Provider’s role in the existing relationship.

3.11 Use relationships with participants for the personal satisfaction of needs for otherwise unmet needs for attention, friendship, understanding, or resolution his or her own relational or personal difficulties.

3.12 Engage in inappropriate sharing of personal information with participants beyond what is authentic and useful for modeling techniques of constructive and effective confiding, complaining and problem solving in relationships or for constructive use of PAIRS techniques.

3.13 Initiate or conduct a PAIRS course, workshop or seminar if the Provider’s ability to uphold the goals of this program is threatened or the learning of the participants is jeopardized.

3.13 Engage in conduct that would discredit PAIRS or the professionalism of PAIRS Providers.

4. Guidance for PAIRS Providers

4.1 Providers contact your Project Manager and PAIRS Foundation for further guidance on ethical choices in their own conduct of PAIRS activities.

4.2 Providers consult with the ethical guidelines of their own profession to assist in guiding their ethical choices in their conduct of PAIRS activities.

4.3 Providers contact your Project Manager and PAIRS Foundation when they are concerned that an ethical violation may have occurred either in their own choices or in the choices of other PAIRS Providers.

5. Attestation

I hereby certify that I have fully read and reviewed the preceding Ethical Standards for Providers of PAIRS Programs and agree that so long as I maintain my licensing and affiliation with PAIRS, or identify myself as being or having been affiliated with PAIRS, I shall be bound by the obligations, restrictions and guidelines contained herein.
PRINT NAME

SIGNATURE DATE

Please return this signed signature page to your PAIRS Trainer or fax to PAIRS Foundation, Inc. in the USA: 1-954-337-2981

www.pairs.com
info@pairs.com

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