



# Straight Spouse Network

## **Affiliation and Sponsorship Guidelines:**

### **Definitions:**

*Affiliation: adopts or accepts as a member or branch.*

*Sponsorship: (a) supports through provision of services/products; (b) finances project/event carried out by another group; and/or (c) is used for fundraising purposes.*

### **Core Requirements:**

**Face-to-Face (F2F) Groups, Gatherings and Retreats, and Email Support Lists are affiliated with SSN. Other Events are sponsored by SSN.**

**To be affiliated with, or sponsored by SSN, the group or event will:**

- Share SSN's core mission of Reaching Out, Healing and Building Bridges.
- Agree to respect all decisions made by a straight spouse staying in or leaving a mixed-orientation marriage or relationship (so long as the individual's decisions are not dangerous to themselves or to others).
- Discourage gay bashing.
- Be willing at some level to participate in SSN fundraising activities.
- Respect the confidentiality of all participants (additional confidentiality issues are addressed below under specific requirements for each type of activity).
- Inform participants of these guidelines.

### **Additional Specific Requirements:**

**Additional specific requirements for F2F groups, gatherings, or retreats, and email support lists are:**

- **Face-to-Face groups:**
  - Agree to be listed on the SSN website and to accept referrals from the SSN first responder team.
  - Agree that group leaders will keep Support/Field Services Coordinator and Webmaster informed of any changes to group contact information for the SSN database.

- Agree that new Group formation and leadership changes within groups are subject to Executive Director and Support/Field Services Coordinator vetting and approval.
  - Agree that group leader will accept Leader's List Serv emails and keep the group informed of current SSN issues. (Email addresses at straightspouse.org are available should a group wish to make use of one).
  - Agree that group leader will (1) read the group starter packet (technical how-to's and background research materials and article reprints illustrating the range of outcomes) and (2) share the materials/reprints with their members as needed or wanted.
  - Agree to accept all straight spouses who desire support as members regardless of path or journey they have chosen to take.
  - Agree to allow fundraising and event notifications to be sent to the group from SSN.
  - Agree to participate in SSN fundraising campaigns at whatever level they can.
  - Agree to provide statistical data to SSN upon request.
  - Agree that no mandatory fee shall be charged for facilitator services by the group leader. However, the group may "pass the hat" to cover expenses for meeting location, speakers, refreshments, donations to SSN, etc.
  - Agree that Face-to-Face groups are understood to be peer support groups rather than professional (therapeutic) support groups.
  - Agree that the confidentiality of participants is vital:
    - Group participants and leaders will refrain from passing along the personal information of participants unless they have been given permission to do so.
    - Contacts and Leaders will not divulge names and personal information of group members to the media.
    - If a group holds social events and photographs are taken, the wishes of participants regarding the sharing or posting of these photographs must be observed.
  - Agree to engage in "bridge building" efforts with local organizations as feasible.
- **Email support lists:**
    - Agree to adopt email support list rules substantially similar to those currently used on Str8s, SSML-MOR and SOTTs. [ **Note:** After guidelines are accepted a copy of the Str8's list rules will be attached to this document]
    - Agree to be listed on the SSN website with a **current and accurate** description of the list and the population it serves. Also agree to provide clear instructions on the subscription process and membership requirements.
    - Agree that no bashing of other lists will be allowed upon their list.
    - Agree that support list managers/owners become a part of a list serv which will allow them to ask questions of other SSN affiliated list servs owners/managers for the purpose of clarification of mission of a particular list

and for joint problem-solving. (Again, email addresses at straightspouse.org are available should a list manager/owner desire one).

- Agree to provide statistical data to SSN upon request.
- Agree to allow fundraising announcements and event notifications to be sent to the list from SSN, (i.e., list members can post or the list owner will post upon request from SSN.)
- Agree that new email support list affiliations are subject to Executive Director and Support/Field Services Coordinator vetting and approval.
- Agree that the confidentiality of participants is vital.
  - Information shared on each email support list is confidential to that list. (I.e., confined to the people on that list and through that list alone. This means that you do not forward the posts of a person on one email list to another email list... **NO CROSS POSTING!!**)
  - Information and/or incidents cannot be shared with another list, anyone on another list, or someone who is not on the list at the time the incident occurred.)
  - List members and list owners/managers will refrain from passing along the personal information of members without prior permission.
  - List members and list owners/managers will not divulge names and personal information to the media.
- Agree that the primary purpose of email support lists is to provide personal, confidential, peer to peer (rather than professional) support and information. The purpose is not to provide a dating service or a vehicle for personal ads, although we do understand that friendships are formed through list communication that may or may not develop into relationships offline.
- Agree that email support list members and list owners/managers will refrain from expressing political or religious views on the list that do not directly relate to the straight spouse perspective or journey.
  - Examples of acceptable religious discussion are, but not limited to:
    - “Because I am Catholic this is especially hard in view of the Vatican perspective on Gays... any suggestions?”
    - “Because my family is Orthodox, it is hard to tell them... any suggestions?”
  - Examples of acceptable political discussion are, but not limited to:
    - The possible effect of current or pending legislation which may lead to the creation of additional straight spouses. (I.e., ban on gay marriages, domestic partnership legislation, etc.)
    - The effects of lack of support for gay teens / young adults which may lead them to live their lives in the closet thus create the potential of more straight spouses.
  - Political and religious views (other than those related to the straight spouse perspective and journey) may only be expressed on a list if the list has a mechanism whereby these types of discussions can be held without interfering with the primary support mission of the list. (E.g., the Str8s list has an online forum with separate topics for religion and

politics where any view can be expressed without everyone on the list being subjected to off topic political and religious discussions.)

- **Gatherings / Retreats and Other Events (Speakers Panels, Gay Pride, etc.):**

- To be considered SSN affiliated (Gatherings/Retreats), the primary purpose of the event must support SSN's three core mission areas of Reaching Out, Healing, and Building Bridges.
  - To be considered SSN sponsored (Other Events), the primary purpose of the event must support SSN's three core mission areas of Reaching Out, Healing, and Building Bridges.
  - All events must be approved by the Executive Director and Support/Field Services Coordinator prior to any advertising.
  - All events are open to all straight spouses regardless of path taken in order to provide the widest range of options and information.
  - Approved events may be listed on the SSN website upon request of the organizer, with a link to request more information.
  - If the event is public, and is intended to be educational, all materials to be given out must be approved by SSN Executive Director and Communication Coordinator in advance.
  - Use of Tax ID number for events: An organizer of an SSN sponsored or affiliated event may use the tax ID number for a specific activity of an event, if the activity:
    - Implements the SSN mission (for example, healing circle (*support*); joint collaboration with another organization for common goals (*bridge building*); PR/ marketing (*reaching out*))
    - Raises money to pay for SSN's infrastructure that facilitates and manages support, bridge building, and reaching out services to spouses.
- Use of tax ID number is limited to:
- Renting space or exhibit table(s) to be used for the specified purposes listed above.
  - The official hours of the event taking place in the rented space or with the exhibit table, not "after hours" activities.
- Alcoholic beverages are not excluded at an SSN event, but all advertising must make clear that SSN is not responsible, nor does SSN provide intoxicants for attendees. It should also be noted that the consumption of alcoholic beverages is an "after hours" event and is not to be considered a part of the SSN event.
  - Advertising for a gathering/retreat type event must indicate whether the gathering/retreat is a "family friendly" event or an adults only event.
  - SSN strongly recommends the usage of a "buddy system" for gathering / retreat type events to ensure that newcomers feel welcomed and are not isolated.

- Gathering/Retreat/Event organizers and participants agree that the confidentiality of participants is vital.
  - Gathering/Retreat/Event organizers and participants will refrain from passing along the personal information of participants without prior permission (including posting names of attendees and their roommates if desired).
  - Gathering/Retreat/Event organizers and participants will not divulge names and personal information to the media.
  - If photographs are taken, the wishes of participants regarding the sharing or posting of these photographs must be observed.

## **Insurance**

**Please Note:** SSN's insurance (liability solely) covers only Officers and Directors acting in their official capacity. Individuals participating in any Face-to-Face (F2F) Groups, Email Support Lists, Gatherings, Retreats, and/or Other Events are responsible for their own actions and any consequences thereof.

## **Face-to-Face Groups, Email Support Lists, Gatherings / Retreats / Other Events that do not chose to accept these guidelines:**

Action that SSN may take in the event that a F2F group, a gathering or retreat, or an email support list already on our website chooses not to buy into a formally defined relationship include but are not limited to:

- Face-to-Face groups who chose not to “buy in” and adopt a formal relationship will be removed from the SSN website and the SSN database and first responders will not refer individuals to them.
- Email support lists who chose not to “buy in” will still have their email support list listed on the website, but it will be moved to the “related resources” page with a disclaimer that these are other resources which are available but that are not affiliated with or sponsored by SSN.
- Gatherings / Retreats / Other events that chose not to apply for approval will not be advertised via the SSN website and will not be allowed to use the SSN banner or materials.

## **In unlikely event of non-compliance to these guidelines:**

Actions SSN may take if after entering a formal relationship there is a violation of terms:

- Groups not adhering to current SSN guidelines.
  - Notice of violation of terms to group leader and review of guidelines by Support/Field Services Coordinator.
  - Personal mentoring by Support/Field Services Coordinator.
  - Mentoring and/or modeling by assigned mentor.
  - Education by trained SSN leaders/trainers.
  - Cessation of referring newcomers to the group until the group improves. Referral will be made instead to an approved local contact.
  - As last resort, group will be removed from SSN website.
  
- Email Support Lists not adhering to current SSN guidelines.
  - Notification to list owner/manager of violation of terms and a review of guidelines by Support/Field Services Coordinator.
  - Mentoring and/or modeling by assigned mentor.
  - As a last resort the Email support list will be moved to the “related resources” page with a disclaimer that these are other resources which are available but that are not affiliated with or sponsored by SSN.
  
- Gatherings / Retreats / Other events not adhering to current SSN Guidelines.
  - Notification to organizer of the violation and counseling by Support/Field Services Coordinator.
  - Mentoring to ensure that violation is not repeated.
  - In the event of repeated or severe violations, event will not be affiliated or sponsored in the future.

## **Attachment 1:**

### **Str8s Mailing List Guidelines**

REPEATED failure to follow the fundamental principles of these guidelines will result in your removal from the list.

- When subscribing, you should INTRODUCE YOURSELF within the first month. This introduction can be as discreet or as descriptive as you like.
- We believe in TOLERANCE and MUTUAL RESPECT for others.
- We are here to help each other heal. PERSONAL ATTACKS on or off list are not helpful to healing, and are therefore NOT TOLERATED.
- We are each responsible for our own behavior. COMMON COURTESY is the rule. When writing, we suggest using "I" phrasing like "I think," "I feel that" or "in my experience" and avoiding phrases like "you should" or "everyone thinks."
- READ CAREFULLY what you RECEIVE, to make sure you fully understand the message.
- READ CAREFULLY what you SEND, to make sure your message will not be misunderstood.
- ASK FOR CLARIFICATION from the sender to check whether you have misunderstood something posted by someone else, particularly if you feel you have been personally attacked.
- LABEL HUMOR OR SARCASM, if you're going to use it.
- Remember that WITHOUT CUES associated with tone or body language, it's EASY TO MISUNDERSTAND what's being said.
- Be TOLERANT OF and helpful to "NEWBIES." Be patient as they first learn to crawl, then to walk.
- Because we are a diverse group with differing backgrounds, please REFRAIN from extended sensitive discussions of PERSONAL POLITICS OR RELIGION. If you wish to share something of a religious nature you found helpful or inspiring, please label it as such in the subject line or beginning of the message.
- Please TAKE PERSONAL DISCUSSIONS OFF LIST. If you see yourself getting into an extended political, religious, personal, or other private discussion with someone else on the list, then as a courtesy to others, please take it off-list into private email. If you are uncomfortable with these discussions, please remember you don't have to engage in them. Please be careful about sharing protected information about a third party particularly privacy protected medical information.
- NO BLANKET CRITICISM OF GAYS OR LESBIANS. Criticize your own spouse if s/he deserves it but not others'. It's okay to vent, and to

respond to others' descriptions of their spouse's behavior with examples from your own experience.

- NO GENERALIZED CRITICISM OF OTHERS. This is common courtesy and avoids hurting others' feelings who may feel differently than you do. Making personal generalization statements that include things like "they always" or "they never" or "everyone" or "no one" are usually not helpful, and could be hurtful to others who don't fit the generalization, and these should be avoided.

- REFER TO the ORIGINAL POST in your response. Either include part of the original post and, identify the author, or make sure you unambiguously refer to its contents. It's very possible that people will read your response before they read the original. Responses without the appropriate context are confusing. If you particularly want someone's attention, include his/her name on the subject line.

- When replying to a long post, KEEP only SHORT EXCERPTS of the ORIGINAL post that are relevant to your response. For clarity, some prefer the quote and respond style, with "short excerpt" original quotes followed by the author's response comments underneath. Do NOT resend entire digests.

- ALWAYS INCLUDE a SUBJECT. If you're responding, your subject line will begin with "RE:." If you are going off the original track, change the subject line. If you ADD to the subject line, please do so ONLY AT THE END, so others can track "threads."

- AVOID using ALL UPPERCASE. It looks like you're shouting! WITH ALL YOUR WORDS IN CAPITALS LETTERS. IT'S HARD TO READ.

- AVOID using the list as a CHATROOM. Many short messages in a row in a short period of time between just a few people is better done in a chatroom to avoid list clutter.

- Please DO NOT FORWARD email either from our list or from another one to our list without getting the author's permission. Communication on this list is considered to be privileged and confidential. What's said here stays here.

- FORMAT YOUR POSTS. For example, separate your main ideas with paragraphs rather than run everything together. We strive to keep the list easy to read. If you have several "quotes" and responses to include in a reply, then clearly separate them with "quote" followed by "response." This list only accepts text posts as a virus control. Do not send pictures or animation, as your post will not go through. Also, you must post from your subscribed address.

- ACKNOWLEDGMENT. By reading and/or posting to the Str8s list, you are acknowledging receipt of the guidelines and agreeing to abide by their terms.

- REMINDERS. From time to time these guidelines will be posted to the list as a reminder for everyone.