



# **Straight Spouse Network Policies**

## **(Position Papers)**

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# Accounting and Fiduciary Guidelines

## Accounting and fiduciary standards to be followed by the Straight Spouse Network.

Policy: The Straight Spouse Network, Inc. has a legal fiduciary duty and a duty of care to be meticulous in its financial accountability. The duty is apparent in the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002<sup>1</sup>, which gives donors a legally enforceable expectation that the funds they contribute will be used to further one or more charitable and educational purposes. Nonprofits, unlike businesses, have an accountability extending to the public at large and not just to identifiable stockholders.

Because of the importance of maintaining a prudent and responsible control over funds received by it, plus the necessity of ensuring that all donated funds are dedicated to Section 501 9(c) (3) purposes, the organization will rely on specific bookkeeping procedures to ensure proper accountability and compliance. The following accounting control procedures are favored by the IRS.

1. **Current Financials:** Basic financial books and a standard accounting system shall be set up and kept current by a knowledgeable bookkeeper. An Audit will be completed whenever the Total Revenue for a given year reaches \$ 100,000.00.
2. **Budget:** The budget process shall be meaningful and enforced. It will reflect the Straight Spouse Network's highest and best use of its funds. The budget will reflect the organization's mission statement and strategic plan. There will be a comprehensive, predetermined and agreed set of priorities, all of which should be reflected in the annual budget. Steps in the process will involve:
  - A. Careful development of a draft budget with sufficient detail so it can be monitored.
  - B. Allocation of each line item and monthly financial statement which includes budget comparisons on a quarterly basis.
  - C. Any line item above 5% of budget would be red flagged and there will be a built- in procedure to check process for screening items in excess of budget.
  - D. A commitment by the Board that the budget will be followed except in very unusual cases where there is a modification process to allow changes to the budget.

(<sup>1</sup>Sarbanes-Oxley Act, Corporate Responsibility, Public Law 107 – 204, July 30, 2002)

3. **Control of Expenditures:** A cost-benefit analysis that should always be desirable, regardless of the Straight Spouse Network's financial situation. When finances are adequate and growing, there will be a look ahead and a plan in place for any financial downturn that could occur. Program, projects and staffs that have either lost efficiency or no longer reflect the priorities of the organization should be re-examined. The goal should be to achieve these kinds of efficiencies thorough the control of expenditures without requiring a traumatic pruning or financial hardship.

## 4. Receipt of Donations

- A. Cash/checks should be deposited on a timely basis
- B. Posting should be done on a timely basis utilizing an approved bookkeeping program e.g., QuickBooks), with a monthly reconciliation performed and reported to the Treasurer for reporting to the Board.

## 5. Expenditure Control

- A. No disbursements should be made except for expense items in the current budget or items separately approved by the Board after review and confirmation that such expense is necessary and desirable in furtherance of the Straight Spouse Network's purpose and that there is adequate funding existing to support the expense.
- B. Fixed assets will be clearly segregated. Board approval will be required for any fixed asset purchase not already approved in the annual budget and the Board will be informed of sale or disposal of same. Inventories of fixed assets should be performed on an annual basis
- C. All persons authorized to approve expenditures will clearly be identified.
- D. All invoices or requests for expenditures will be supported by appropriate receipts and/or approval indicating receipt of goods and services.
- E. Pre-numbered checks for disbursements will be used. Signature stamps should be kept in a secure place.
- F. Cash disbursements, when necessary, will be maintained in a cash disbursement record.
- G. Dual signatures will be required for any check of \$500 or above.
- H. Journal entries will be made of all disbursements using an approved bookkeeping method (e.g., QuickBooks).
- I. Bank statements will be received by the person in charge of checking and savings accounts and reconciled on a monthly basis with a report at the monthly Board meeting. This report will be forwarded to the Board Treasurer for review before the monthly Board meeting.

6. **Fund raising Standards:** The Straight Spouse Network is committed to following these standards:

- A. No information will be false or deceptive, and there will be no omission of dates or other material facts, inclusion of misleading photographs, exaggeration, etc.
- B. Fund raising appeals will not create unrealistic donor expectations regarding what will be accomplished with the gift.
- C. Statements made in fund raising appeals will be honored. Any instruction given by the donor with the gift will be followed, or the gift will not be accepted.
- D. The Straight Spouse Network will not serve as a conduit for funds not intended directly for use for the Straight Spouse Network mis-

sion.

E. Fund raising appeals which offer incentives or premiums in exchange for a donation must advise the donor of the fair market value of the incentive and inform the donor that the value is not deductible for tax purposes.

F. The Straight Spouse Network will provide a report, including financial information, on any project for which it is soliciting funds.

G. Full disclosure on the Straight Spouse Network's financial statements of payments made to professional fund raisers based on amount of money raised will occur. The Straight Spouse Network will not compensate employees on basis of percentage of funds raised.

H. Tax deductible gifts will not be used to pass money or benefits to any individual for private use.

I. Officers may not receive royalties for any product used for promotional purposes by the Straight Spouse Network.

J. Property and gifts received by the Straight Spouse Network will be acknowledged without a statement of the gift's market value. The Straight Spouse Network will notify the donor of reporting requirements (set by the IRS) for gifts over \$5,000.

K. The Straight Spouse Network will at all times avoid accepting a donor's gift which would knowingly place a significant burden on the donor.

7. In instances where there are projects not substantially overseen by the Straight Spouse Network employees, the Straight Spouse Network will establish alternative control procedures to assure that project grants are properly expended consistent with the Straight Spouse Network approved budget.

8. These procedures will be documented in official records of the Straight Spouse Network and effectively communicated to all appropriate persons, including volunteers. The Straight Spouse Network will create an environment where all staff members and volunteers know the importance placed on financial accountability and are aware of their responsibilities within the internal control system.

9. The Straight Spouse Network will use a certified public accountant to prepare yearly 990 required by the IRS. This will be presented for Board approval prior to signature and presentation to the IRS.

Approved, Board of Directors: November 1, 2011

## Advertising in News and Notes

**The Straight Spouse Network will accept advertising for publications of the official newsletter News & Notes at the discretion of the Executive Director and adherence to the following procedures.**

1. Fee scale determined by the Executive Director and valid for the calendar year.
2. Submission of camera ready advertisement by deadline for each publication as set by the Executive Director.
3. Payment for business card, quarter page, or half page size advertisement rendered prior to deadline.
4. All advertisement will be reserved for the last pages in each publication.
5. All advertisement will be marked "Paid Advertisement."

Approved Board of Directors, December 11, 2010

## Advertising and Research Projects

**Guidelines for Requesting, Evaluating and Accepting, Advertising, and Managing Research Projects about Straight Spouse Network Constituents and Their Families**

The Straight Spouse Network's primary mission is to serve straight spouses and their families. The Straight Spouse Network welcomes research that will enhance understanding of the straight spouse experience especially if it might enhance the Straight Spouse Network's ability to provide meaningful support.

Research proposals and access to Straight Spouse Network constituents which might threaten the supportive community, or in any way undermine it, will be denied. This includes requests:

- from a researcher or organization with known bias against straight spouses, LGBT persons, persons of color, either gender, religion, homosexuality, bisexuality, and transgenderism;
- in which it appears the purpose, methodology, hypothesis, or assumptions underlying the research is denigrating to straight spouses or their families, e.g., (a) the straight spouse may be at fault at some point, (b) sexual orientation is not genetic, or (c) transgender people are not born that way; and/or
- where the projected audience for the research results is a group which (a) has negative attitudes toward LGBT persons, (b) wants to

change the sexual orientation of gay or lesbian, bisexual, or trans persons, (c) takes a stand against divorce, (d) speaks out against same-sex behavior, or (e) opposes transgenderism.

### **I. Proposal Submission Requirements (to be sent to the Straight Spouse Network Executive Director)**

A. Researcher's credentials (including degree and previous work in the area) and sponsoring institution, if any

B. Precise proposed study description, including:

1. Purpose (e.g., exploratory, clinical, related to helping straight spouses and families)
2. Hypothesis, if any
3. Overall Methodology (quantitative, qualitative, phenomenological, etc)
4. Data gathering tool
5. Form of expected product (presentation, paper, article)
6. Expected audience
7. Presentation venues

C. Agreement to Privacy, Confidentiality, and Straight Spouse Network property rights, acknowledgements, and citations where appropriate

1. Demographic data gathered will become the property of Straight Spouse Network
2. Personal information about respondents will be kept confidential and seen by only the researcher
3. No personal information that might identify any respondent will be published in any form
4. The Straight Spouse Network will be cited as one of the sources of the data in the introductory background/methodology section of the final product

### **II. Request Evaluation and Selection Criteria:**

A. Credentials

1. Appropriate professional training in this kind of research work, knowledge of this field of study, and evidence of relevant professional capability (e.g., references)
2. Knows or agrees to review research available on straight spouses and their families and to include references to such work in the final product

B. Purpose

1. Seeking facts and communicating them for an educational purpose

C. Final Product

1. Will match purpose of the research: information and education about the findings, not proving some hidden agenda
2. Will include a review of the literature and the limitations of the particular research

D. Written assurance (followed up by a contract, if the researcher is approved) to requirements in I(C)

### **III. Contract Awarded if criteria met IV. Research Project Implementation Procedures**

A. Research Not Funded by the Straight Spouse Network

1. Researcher provides Executive Director (ED) with proposed content of research, project announcement, and contact information.
2. ED transmits project announcement to managers of Straight Spouse Network online affiliate groups, group facilitators, contacts, Council members, Staff, volunteers, and the Board.
3. Straight Spouse Network constituents who are interested contact the researcher directly.
4. Demographic research components (excluding personal identity) shall be transmitted (preferably electronically) to the Straight Spouse Network's Technical Director to be stored electronically and securely.
5. Substantive research responses (excluding personal identity) shall be transmitted to the Straight Spouse Network's Technical Director to be stored electronically and securely.
6. Using the demographic information submitted, the Straight Spouse Network's Technical Director will prepare demographic profile of the Straight Spouse Network respondents and report the results to the researcher and Straight Spouse Network Executive Director (or designee).
7. The researcher will send the final copy of his/her report to the Straight Spouse Network ED for safe storage (digital format and hard copy) and dissemination within the Straight Spouse Network for educational purposes.

B. Research Funded by the Straight Spouse Network

1. If the study involves a survey, the Technical Director will set up the research questionnaire on the website to collect the data securely with a hit/send that will go to the researcher.
2. For studies involving a survey, the Technical Director will inform the researcher about the process and technical procedures for retrieving the questionnaire data.
3. Questionnaire responses will be sent directly to the researcher and to the Executive Director or his/her designee.
4. Demographic data from the research (excluding personal identity) shall be transmitted (preferably electronically) by the researcher to the Straight Spouse Network's Technical Director to be stored electronically and securely. [Amity question – do these become our property? Kathy - no, we just need them for info.]
5. Substantive research responses (excluding personal identity) shall be transmitted to the Straight Spouse Network's Technical Director

to be stored electronically and securely.

6. The final report from the research becomes the property of the Straight Spouse Network.

7. If the final report is cited in later research by the researcher, each reference shall be attributed to the Straight Spouse Network.

## **V. Publication Guidelines**

A. All publications are subject to the Straight Spouse Network's Publication Guidelines (attached). The researcher has to follow Straight Spouse Network guidelines for gathering the data, but the guidelines for the research method and product will follow the university's guidelines.

Approved Straight Spouse Network Board of Directors, March 10, 2009 Revision Approved: June 17, 2012

Attachment:

## **Affiliation and Sponsorship Guidelines**

Definitions:

Affiliation: Being adopted or accepted as a member or branch.

Sponsorship: (a) supporting through provision of services/products; (b) financing project/event carried out by another group; and/or (c) using for fundraising purposes.

Face-to-Face (F2F) Groups, Gatherings and Retreats, and Email Support Lists are affiliated with the Straight Spouse Network. Other Events are sponsored by the Straight Spouse Network.

Core Requirements:

To be affiliated with, or sponsored by the Straight Spouse Network, the group or event will:

- Share the Straight Spouse Network'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 Straight Spouse Network 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, Retreats, and Email support lists are:

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- Face-to-Face groups:
  - Agree to be listed on the Straight Spouse Network website and to accept referrals from the Straight Spouse Network first responder team
  - Agree that group facilitators will keep Support/Field Services Coordinator and Webmaster informed of any changes to group contact information for the Straight Spouse Network 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 facilitators will accept Leader's List Serv emails and keep the group informed of current Straight Spouse Network issues. (Email addresses at straightspouse.org are available should a group wish to make use of one)
  - Agree that group facilitator will (1) read the Facilitator's Handbook and (2) share the materials 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 as long as they fit within the parameters of the group
  - Agree to allow fundraising and event notifications to be sent to the group from the Straight Spouse Network
  - Agree to participate in Straight Spouse Network fundraising campaigns at whatever level they can
  - Agree to provide statistical data to the Straight Spouse Network upon request
  - Agree that no mandatory fee shall be charged for facilitator services by the group facilitator. (However, the group may "pass the hat" to cover expenses for meeting location, speakers, refreshments, donations to the Straight Spouse Network, 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 facilitators will refrain from passing along the personal information of participants unless they have been given

permission to do so

- Contacts and Facilitators 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 Str8s list rules will be attached to this document]

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## Affiliation

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- Agree to be listed on the Straight Spouse Network 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 listserv which will allow them to ask questions of other Straight Spouse Network affiliated listservs 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 the Straight Spouse Network upon request
- Agree to allow fundraising announcements and event notifications to be sent to the list from the Straight Spouse Network, (i.e., list members can post or the list owner will post upon request from the Straight Spouse Network.)
- 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 (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.):
- For a Gathering or Event to be considered affiliated with or sponsored by the Straight Spouse Network the primary purpose of the event must support the Straight Spouse Network’s three core mission areas of Reaching Out, Healing, and Building Bridges
- All events must be approved by the Executive Director prior to any advertising on any Straight Spouse funded electronic media
- All sponsored events are open to all straight spouses
- 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 Straight Spouse Network 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 the Straight Spouse Network Executive Director and Communication Coordinator in advance
- Use of the Federal Tax ID number is not available for use for events. If a state tax exempt certificate is desired, please advise the Executive Director and the Staff will make every effort to obtain one. (These take time so notice would have to be made ASAP.) The state tax exempt certificate could then be used a specific activity of an event, if the activity:
  - Implements the Straight Spouse Network 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 the Straight Spouse Network'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 the Straight Spouse Network event, but all advertising must make clear that the Insurance is not responsible, nor does the Straight Spouse Network 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 Straight Spouse Network event.
- Advertising for a gathering/retreat type event must indicate whether the gathering/retreat is a "family friendly" event or an adults only event.
- The Straight Spouse Network 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

**Please Note:** The Straight Spouse Network's insurance (liability solely) covers only Officers and Directors acting in their official capacity. Individuals participating in any Face-to-Face 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 the Straight Spouse Network may take in the event that a Face-to-Face 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 Straight Spouse Network website and the Straight Spouse Network 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 the Straight Spouse Network.
- Gatherings / Retreats / Other events that chose not to apply for approval will not be advertised via the Straight Spouse Network website and will not be allowed to use the Straight Spouse Network banner or materials.

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

Actions the Straight Spouse Network may take if after entering a formal relationship there is a violation of terms:

- Groups not adhering to current Straight Spouse Network guidelines
- Notice of violation of terms to group facilitator 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 the Straight Spouse Network 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 the Straight Spouse Network website
- Email Support Lists not adhering to current Straight Spouse Network 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 the Straight Spouse Network.
- Gatherings / Retreats / Other events not adhering to current Straight Spouse Network 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

Board Reaffirmed: July 26, 2011

Board Approved Revisions: June 19, 2012

## Charity - 501(c)(3) - Document Retention

The Straight Spouse Network, Incorporated will use the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) guidelines on Document Retention for 501(c)(3) organizations.

These records are to be maintained in the Central Office of the Organization in both hard copy and in electronic non-volatile form, with non-volatile backup in a centralized electronic location on the Straight Spouse Network Website.

Per IRS Compliance Guide for Public Charities 501 (c) (3): <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p4221pc.pdf>

Public charities must keep records for federal tax purposes, for as long as they may be needed, to document evidence of compliance with provisions of the Code. Generally, this means the organization must keep records that support an item of income or deduction on a return until the statute of limitations for that return runs out. The statute of limitations has run when the organization can no longer amend its return and the IRS can no longer assess additional tax. Generally, the statute of limitations runs three years after the date the return is due or filed, whichever is later. An organization may be required to retain records longer for other legal purposes, including state or local tax purposes.

### Record Retention Periods

Record retention periods vary depending on the types of records and returns. Permanent Records – Some records should be kept permanently. These include the application for recognition of tax-exempt status, the determination letter recognizing tax-exempt status, and organizing documents, such as articles of incorporation and by-laws, with amendments, as well as board minutes.

**Employment Tax Records** – If an organization has employees, it must keep employment tax records for at least four years after the date the tax becomes due or is paid, whichever is later.

**Records for Non-Tax Purposes** – When records are no longer needed for tax purposes, an organization should keep them until they are no longer needed for non-tax purposes. For example, a grantor, insurance company, creditor, or state agency may require that records be kept longer than the IRS requires.

Board Approved: September 13, 2011

## Conflicts of Interest Policy

[Distribute to all board members, officers, and management level employees, plus any other employees who may be in positions to influence your organization's decision making.]

### 1. Reason for Policy

As a nonprofit, tax-exempt entity, this organization has been organized for public benefit and depends on grants, charitable contributions, and other forms of public support. This organization, therefore, has a mandate to at all times promote public, not private, interests, and to avoid conflicts of interest. The Internal Revenue Service as well as state corporate, tax, and consumer protection officials view the operations of nonprofit organizations akin to a public trust, with legally enforceable accountability to both governmental authorities and members of the public.

### 2. Summary of Policy

Any possible conflict of interest on the part of a director, officer, or management employee, ("Decision Makers," as defined below in Section 3), shall be fully and promptly disclosed to the President or Executive Director, who shall promptly investigate the facts and report to the Board as a matter of record. Disclosure shall be made as soon as a Decision Maker discovers a personal or other entity interest, which could affect the activities, programs, property, employees or services of this organization, or any matter or transaction potentially requiring Board action. Further, each Decision Maker shall annually complete the Annual Conflicts of Interest Questionnaire (Attachment A) confirming that all conflicts and potential conflicts existing during the previous year, or currently existing, have been disclosed. When a possible conflict has been disclosed, the Board shall determine whether a conflict actually exists and whether it is material. Where a material conflict exists, the Board shall determine whether the contemplated transaction or other conflicting involvement may be authorized as just, fair and reasonable as to the organization. Independent counsel as appropriate will guide the decisions of the Board on these matters, and their guiding principle shall be the integrity and best interests of this organization and the advancement of its purposes.

Between the general public and this organization and its Decision Makers, there exists a fiduciary duty, which carries with it a broad and unbending duty of loyalty. The Decision Makers have the responsibility to administer the affairs of this organization honestly and pru-

dently, and to exercise their best care, skill and judgment for the sole benefit of this organization. These persons shall exercise the utmost good faith in all transactions related to their duties, and they shall not use their positions with this organization or knowledge gained there from for their personal benefit. The best interests of this organization must always have the first priority. All transactions must only be approved if they secure for this organization full competitive advantages as to product, service and price, and contains no material element of private benefit.

### 3. Persons Concerned

This policy is directed not only to directors and officers, but also to all employees who can influence the actions of this organization or its Board, or make commitments on their behalf ("Decision Makers"). For example, this would include all who make purchasing decisions, all other persons who might be described as "management personnel," and all who have proprietary information concerning the organization (collectively "Decision Makers"),

### 4. Areas in Which Conflicts May Arise

Conflicts of interest may arise with third party entities whenever a Decision Maker is wearing a second hat of responsibility, either personally or with another

- Persons or entities from which this organization leases property, equipment, and staff.
- Persons or entities with whom this organization is dealing or planning to deal in connection with the donation, purchase or sale of real estate, securities, or other property.
- Persons or entities paying honoraria or royalties for products or services delivered by this organization or its agents or employees.
- Other nonprofit or for-profit organizations pursuing possible affiliation or collaboration for a transaction, project or ongoing program.
- Foundations, government grantors or contractors, corporations, or others supporting the organization.
- Agencies, organizations and associations that monitor, regulate, or otherwise affect the operations of this organization.

organization. examples:

These conflicts occur in a multitude of contexts. Here are a few

- Persons or entities supplying goods and services to this organization.

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### 5. Nature of Conflicting Interests

A material conflicting interest is defined as an interest, direct or indirect, between a Decision Maker and any other person or entity (such as those examples mentioned in Section 4) which might affect or influence, or might reasonably be thought by others to affect or influence, the judgment or conduct of a Decision Maker of this organization.

- Owning stock or holding debt or other proprietary interests in any third

AS examples, direct interests might arise through: party dealing with this organization or its affiliate.<sup>3</sup>

- Investing in a business in which this organization or an affiliate holds an interest that reasonably could affect the value of the individual's investment.
- Investing in a non-publicly traded business in which the Decision Maker either owns 5% or more of the voting stock, or in any other way exercises effective influence of the business.
- Holding office, serving on the board, participating in management or being otherwise employed (or formerly employed) in any third party dealing with this organization or its affiliate.
- Receiving any form of remuneration or benefit for services with respect to individual transactions involving this organization or its affiliate.
- Using this organization's or any affiliate's personnel, equipment, supplies, or resources, or good will for personal benefit, or for other than organization-approved activities, programs and purposes.
- Receiving personal gifts or loans from third parties dealing with this organization or its affiliate. (Receipt of any gift is disapproved except gifts of nominal value, which could not be refused without discourtesy. No personal gift of money should ever be accepted.)
- Obtaining or possessing an interest in real estate, securities or other property that this organization or its affiliate might consider buying or leasing.
- Expending staff time during normal business hours for personal affairs or for other organizations, nonprofit or otherwise.

<sup>3</sup> An affiliate is any entity (whether nonprofit or for-profit) (1) which this organization directly or indirectly owns or controls 20% or more of the voting stock, voting membership rights, or governing board, or which directly or indirectly owns or controls a similar 20% or more of this organization, or (2) which has a principal purpose to benefit this organization, or (3) which is under common control with this organization.

- Obtaining or reserving personal ownership or royalty interest in copyrights, trademarks or patents in which this organization or its affiliate has an interest.

### 6. Indirect Interests of Related Parties

Conflicting interests may also be indirect. A Decision Maker will be considered to have an indirect interest in another entity, transaction, or property if any of the following have an interest:

- A family member of a Decision Maker. (The IRS defines family member for these purposes as spouses, brothers and sisters (by whole or half blood), spouses of brothers and sisters (by whole or half blood), ancestors, children, grandchildren, great grandchildren, and spouses of children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren.)
- An estate or trust of which Decision Maker or family member is a beneficiary, personal representative, or trustee.

- An entity of which a family member of the Decision Maker is an officer, director or employee, or in which the family member has ownership or other proprietary interests.
- A colleague or employee of a law firm, accounting firm, or other professional entity of which the Decision Maker or family member is an owner, employee, or otherwise affiliated.

#### 7. Interpretation of This Statement of Policy

The relations listed in Section 4 potentially giving rise to areas of conflicting interests and the direct and indirect interests listed in Sections 5 and 6 are not exhaustive. Conceivably, conflicts might arise in other areas or through other relations. It is expected that each Decision Maker will recognize such areas and relation by analogy.

The fact that one of the interests described in Sections 5 and 6 exists does not necessarily mean that a conflict exists, or that the conflict, if it exists, is sufficiently material to be of practical importance, or if material, is necessarily adverse to the interests of the organization. However, it is the policy of the Board that the existence of any of the interests described in Sections 5 and 6 shall be promptly disclosed and fully investigated before any transaction is consummated. It shall be the continuing responsibility of all Decision Makers to scrutinize their transactions and outside business interests and relationships for potential conflicts and to immediately make disclosures of all relevant facts and circumstances.

As soon as practical after a potential conflict is identified, disclosure should be made to the president (or if he or she is the one with the conflict, then to the Executive Director,<sup>4 5</sup> who shall promptly investigate and bring these matters to the attention

4 Changed from [OTHER OFFICER] to other Board Member, 4/26/02 Board Meeting. 5 Changed to Executive Director, 7/14/07 Board Meeting.

Conflicts of Interest Policy Page 4 of 8

of the Board. The Board shall then determine whether a conflict exists and whether it is material. Where a material conflict exists, the Board shall determine whether the contemplated transaction may be authorized as just, fair, reasonable, and in the best interest of the organization. The decisions of the Board on these matters will be guided by independent counsel as appropriate, and their guiding principle shall be the integrity and best interests of this organization and the advancement of its purposes.

Any Board member having a possible conflict of interest on any matter shall not vote or use his or her personal influence on the matter, and shall be recused from final discussion and voting after answering all board questions and fully informing the board of all pertinent detail. The Minutes of the Board will reflect all conflicts of interest disclosures and abstentions from voting and the existence of a quorum.

#### 8. Annual Conflicts of Interest Questionnaire

To further promote and facilitate the full disclosure of potential and actual conflicts of interest, each Decision Maker shall complete the Annual Conflicts of Interest Questionnaire (Attachment A) upon appointment to Straight Spouse Network, Inc., and at least once each year thereafter.

Board Re-ratified: July 13, 2011

## Diversity Policy

In our mission of Healing and Reaching Out:

It is the goal of the Straight Spouse Network to serve all straight persons who are or have been in mixed orientation relationships -- offering support to individuals as they work to find positive outcomes in their unique situations.

The diversity of this constituency is multidimensional. Straight spouses/partners are found in all walks of life -- encompassing differences in race, cultural and ethnic background, language, nationality, religion, economic status, age, education, marital status, and more. Any of these produces its own variation in the way being a straight spouse seeks support, experiences, and interprets this life event.

For the Straight Spouse Network these differences are but an integral aspect of the diversity of our constituents. The experiences and goals of individual straight spouses are so divergent that there can be no "standard" solution to our issues. As we offer support, the goals, issues, backgrounds, experiences, understandings, values, hopes, and beliefs of individuals are paramount.

We are committed to understanding, acknowledging, honoring, and respecting the diversity we encounter among those whom we serve. We will make these principles evident in all actions of the organization.

It is thus incumbent upon all staff and volunteers of the Straight Spouse Network to:

- identify and understand these differences
- be sensitive to these differences
- seek to understand the implications which they might have for an individual's understanding of what constitutes "positive outcome;" and
- seek ways to include persons who are not well represented in our active constituency

It is our goal for staff, Board, and Council to reflect this diversity -- always within the constraints of organizational needs and available expertise.

**As part of our commitment to Building Bridges:**

We will foster understanding of straight spouse issues among those in the LGBT community:

- recognizing that some straight spouses will choose to remain in relationships with their gay spouse
- knowing how a gay spouse discloses and acts can make a profound difference in the experience of the straight spouse
- aware that co-parenting issues are more easily resolved when there is understanding of viewpoints.

Board Approved: July 26, 2011

## Equal Employment Opportunity Policy

The Straight Spouse Network follows an Equal Employment Opportunity Policy and employs personnel without regard to:

- Gender (including pregnancy)
- Gender identification (an individual's internal sense of one's own gender)
- Sexual orientation (determined by whom an individual is sexually attracted to and also has the potential for loving)
- Race, color, ethnic or religious background, descent or nationality
- Disability (including past, present or future physical, intellectual or psychiatric disability, learning disorder or disease – for example, HIV)
- Marital status
- Age
- Height and weight

This EEO policy applies to employment, internal promotions, training, opportunities for advancement, terminations, relationships with outside vendors and customers, use of contractors and consultants and in dealing with the general public.

Original undated: Re-affirmed: July 26, 2011

## Events Policies

The Straight Spouse Network is committed to provide an environment that enables every attendee to have a positive experience, learn a lot, meet fabulous new people, and feel good about talking and connecting with others. We are proud to host a very diverse group in ways that make everyone feel affirmed and welcome.

Here are some guiding principles:

### 1. Scrupulous protection of confidentiality

- a. Identity protection: Organizers and participants will refrain from communicating personal information about any participant without personal permission (including posting attendee's names and roommates).
- b. Privacy: Stories shared are kept private and not made public in any way. This applies to information shared in official activities such as the Healing Circles and group presentations, as well as informal conversations in free time.
- c. Media: organizers and participants will not divulge names, personal information, or photos to the media.
- d. Photo discretion: Each participant has the right to limit photography which includes their image. This means we must obtain explicit permission before taking photos of other participants and again before making any photograph public, whether sharing with others privately or posting publicly in any format.

### 2. Honoring of one another's physical boundaries

- a. Refuse to participate in or to tolerate sexual or personal harassment  
Sexual harassment is any unwanted attention of a sexual nature, including:

- Unwanted flirtations or advances
- Unwanted touching
- Verbal abuse (including sexual remarks and comments about appearance or personal life)

Personal harassment is any kind of negative interaction, including:

- Accusations, belittling, threats, or public arguments
- Actual or threatened physical assault

- b. If you feel harassed or threatened in any way, or witness bullying behavior, please share this with the host(s) immediately.

### 3. Respecting personal boundaries

Those who are early in their straight spouse journey or who are attending a gathering for the first time often feel overwhelmed. Please listen with care to their needs and stories; yet respect their privacy by not asking questions. We are here to support each other, not to satisfy our own curiosity.

### 4. Respecting the established event schedule

Additional side trips and activities are always allowed, but adding personal events that take place at the primary site or during previously scheduled events need to be coordinated with the hosts well before the gathering or other event.

- b. Courteous and respectful behavior

Refrain from language or actions that might reflect negatively or bring discredit upon yourself, our host(s), other participants or the Straight Spouse Network. All actions are seen as an expression of the organization

6. "Guest" etiquette principles

Act as a "guest" in the hotel, homes of the host(s), or conference center and obey their rules.

7. Promptness of pre-event payment

An event or gathering involves pre-event expenses, such as hiring vendors or performers, and meal supplies. These are covered by deposits in advance to be paid when signing up to attend.

8. Obedience of local, state, and federal laws

Obey all laws as they apply to the event and activities of the event.

9. Role of hosts

It is appropriate for the host(s) of a Straight Spouse Network event to encourage participants to create and maintain an atmosphere that is safe, positive, and caring. Hosts are encouraged to include these guidelines with communications prior to any Straight Spouse Network event.

10. Accountability

If these guiding principles are not followed, the host(s) has the right to remind attendees of proper event behavior. An attendee may be asked to leave if it is not followed.

Board Approved in Draft Principle: March 6, 2012

President Approved in Final: March 8, 2012

## Fraudulent, Unethical Activity

### Board Member/Staff/Volunteers/Contractors/Consultants Responsibility To Report Fraudulent, Unethical or Illegal Activity

An unfortunate aspect of our society is that fraudulent and unethical or illegal activity is a reality to which all organizations are subject, and our organization is no exception.

All Board Members, Staff, Volunteers, Consultants, and Contractors are required to report known or suspected fraud, unethical or illegal activity in a confidential manner. In this context, "confidential" means in writing and not discussed with any other person except as provided below.

Other terms used in this policy are defined in the attachment which forms an integral part of the document.

Anyone suspecting or aware of actual fraud, and/or unethical or illegal conduct has an obligation to report such activity in writing the Executive Director immediately. This information will be held strictly confidential and the reporting person will remain anonymous.

If the subject of the report is the Executive Director, the report is to be made to the President of the Board who will follow the procedures outlined below.

Once such a report is filed, the Straight Spouse Network will follow the following procedures:

1. The Executive Director shall conduct an initial investigation before contacting the individual(s) accused of misconduct.
2. The Executive Director has the authority to consult with an employment law attorney or CPA as needed for assistance.
3. The Executive Director will document the gathering of the information.
4. The Executive Director will inform the Board of such actions.
5. No in-person conversations/meetings will occur without two Straight Spouse Network representatives (Board/Staff) in addition to the person under investigation being present. That person also has the right to have a witness of his/her choosing present. This will not be done via e-mail conversations; it must be preferably in person or via taped conference call.
6. All evidence will be protected, and original documentation will be placed in a safe deposit box.

The Executive Director will provide a copy of this policy either in person or by mail to all Board, Staff, Volunteers, Contractors, and Consultants on a yearly basis. It must be signed and returned to the Executive Director.

Violations of this policy may lead to termination of employment or removal of a director or officer, at the direction of the Board.

"I acknowledge receipt of the above policy, have read it, and understand my responsibilities related to the prevention, detection and reporting of suspected fraud, unethical or illegal activity."

Signature Date

Board Re-Ratified: July 13, 2011

Attachment: Definition of Terms.

Board of Directors\Policies\Fraud Policy Re-ratified July 13, 2011.doc Board Approved 3/11/08

### STRAIGHT SPOUSE NETWORK FRAUD POLICY DEFINITIONS Confidential

- Entrusted with private information and the confidence of another.
- Given in confidence.
- Pertaining to the Straight Spouse Network Privacy Policy (below).

Contractor

- Person who undertakes, for an agreed price, the execution of a work.

#### Employee

- Persons who work for an employer and receive wages, salaries, room and board, or other compensation for their efforts.

#### Ethical

- Conforming to accepted standards of social or professional behavior.

#### Fraud

- Intentional deception resulting in injury to another person.
- A deception carried out particularly by falsification in management or by contravention of taxation or legal requirements.
- Fraud is, roughly, the crime or offense of deliberately deceiving another in order to damage him -- usually, to obtain property or services from him unjustly

#### Illegal

- Prohibited by law or by official or accepted rules.

#### Legal

- Established by or founded upon law or official or accepted rules.

#### Unethical

- Not conforming to approved standards of social or professional behavior.

#### Volunteer

- Person who performs or offers to perform a service out of his or her own free will, often without payment.

Straight Spouse Network Privacy Policy

Board Approved: October 9, 2007 We collect individual, statistical, and donor information.

! Individual information is used only so we can (1) get in touch with you and (2) provide individuals with support and/or resources.

! Statistical information is gathered as part of our mission of providing education about the straight spouse situation and is reported only in the aggregate. No individual can be identified from the aggregated statistical data.

! Donor information is used only internally unless the donor explicitly requests or requires public acknowledgment. We appreciate donors who support us, and will never sell, give, transmit or share our donor list.

Names and contact information are never provided to the media unless an individual has indicated his/her willingness to be a media resource through a signed consent form on file with the Straight Spouse Network Executive Director.

While we make every effort to ensure confidentiality, e-mail transmissions over the Internet are not always secure. We consider e-mail communications to be private and privileged, but we have no control over email between your server and ours.

Credit card information for donations is gathered via our Credit Card processing site using Secure Socket Layer (SSL) technology to protect your data. Please verify that the lock is visible in your browser before submitting financial data.

If you have any questions regarding this privacy policy please email the Executive Director ([dir@straightspouse.org](mailto:dir@straightspouse.org)).

## Straight Spouse Network Publication Guidelines

This document shall govern publications funded and copyrighted by the Straight Spouse Network, principally authored by Straight Spouse Network staff, and used to educate the public or organizations about the Straight Spouse Network's mission, to disseminate data gathered by the Straight Spouse Network, or to provide support to straight spouses, couples, and their families, or any other purpose fulfilling the Straight Spouse Network's mission. It applies to publications, such as the Straight Spouse Network Brochure, which will be used repeatedly and for a longer period of time and represent the face of the Straight Spouse Network. It does not apply to the Straight Spouse Network Newsletter News and Notes or letters.

### Ownership

All publications funded by the Straight Spouse Network and/or principally authored by Straight Spouse Network staff working in either a volunteer or paid capacity shall be copyrighted by, and are the property of, the Straight Spouse Network and not of the author(s). Publications must be distributed only in their original format. Quotations or excerpts from Straight Spouse Network publications appearing in other documents or web pages must be attributed to the Straight Spouse Network. Any other individual or organization, including the author(s), or other organization with which the author(s) may be affiliated, may not republish them in an altered format. All publications shall include a statement to this effect.

### Attribution

The author of all Straight Spouse Network publications shall be listed as the Straight Spouse Network and an individual author(s) shall not be listed on the cover. The only exception to this shall be publications principally authored by Amity Pierce Buxton PhD, founder of the Straight Spouse Network. Any other exceptions shall require approval of the Straight Spouse Network Board of Directors. A paragraph of acknowledgements may be included to list contributors and their position in the Straight Spouse Network (if any) at that time, but not of any other organizations. If a publication is substantially funded by a grant from an individual, foundation, or corporation, the name and/or the logo of the grantor may be displayed prominently on the publication cover, if desired by the grantor, or required as a condition of the grant.

### Format

A consistent, distinctive format and color scheme shall be established for all Straight Spouse Network publications that will include (at

a minimum) the Straight Spouse Network logo, a statement “A Publication of the Straight Spouse Network” on the title page, and the Straight Spouse Network logo, contact information, and date of publication on the back cover. The format shall be designed to be cost-effective and to reflect the Straight Spouse Network mission. To provide consistency and uniformity, the term “Straight Spouse Network” must always be written out fully. It cannot be shortened to initials only (i.e., SSN).

#### **Content**

All publications shall be written from the Straight Spouse perspective. Publications shall be reviewed by the Executive Director, or a Staff member s/he designates, to ensure that they comply with all current written Straight Spouse Network policies, procedures, guidelines, and known research findings. The Straight Spouse Network Board of Directors shall be given a reasonable opportunity, with a clearly stated deadline, to review and comment upon proposed publications before they are finally approved by the Executive Director.

#### **Resources and References**

All references to online and face-to-face support groups, related organizations, and other resources shall be made through a link to the appropriate page on the straightspouse.org website. No reference shall be made to any resource or organization not listed on the straightspouse.org website. All email contact information shall be to a straightspouse.org email address. The mailing address and phone number listed shall be the Straight Spouse Network Central Office.

#### **Fund raising**

A fundraising request and fundraising information for the Straight Spouse Network shall be included at the end of the publication. No fundraising requests for any other organization may be included.

#### **Style**

Each publication should be written for an audience of non-scholars or professionals. This means that layperson’s vocabulary and not jargon is to be used; necessary technical terms are explained, defined, or illustrated; and sentences are not complex. The writing and presentation style needs to be consistent throughout each publication.

#### **Editing**

All publications shall be edited and proofread to ensure correct grammar, punctuation, and usage, no typographical errors, and consistency of margins, font size, etc.

#### **Publication Schedule**

Printing of any Straight Spouse Network publications shall be scheduled in such a way that more than one publication can be printed at the same time to keep printing costs down. Straight Spouse Network publications shall be printed in sufficient numbers to satisfy the demand for the publication for at least a year, to keep publication and printing costs down.

#### **Periodic Review**

Each Straight Spouse Network publication shall be reviewed and revised if necessary prior to any reprinting to ensure it is up to date, including website links, contact addresses, research findings, and statistics.

Approved Board of Directors: December 11, 2007 Edited and Reaffirmed: July 26, 2011

## **Travel Policy**

### **I. Travel Expenses for Persons Attending Official Straight Spouse Network Business**

A. The actual incurred expenses for airfare, ground transportation, conference fees (if applicable), and hotel lodging for official Straight Spouse Network business will be reimbursed by the Straight Spouse Network. Meal reimbursement for official Straight Spouse Network business will be paid up to a maximum per diem rate approved in advance. The US Government meal per diem rates will be used as a default rate and adjusted only if deemed appropriate by the Straight Spouse Network Executive Director.

B. Attendees must gather and return to the Executive Director, within TWO WEEKS of the event, a detailed expense report using the Straight Spouse Network’s expense report format, original receipts, and any other materials related to the event expenses. Copies of e-tickets for air transportation are acceptable.

C. Within one month of the event, a report and any materials collected should be forwarded to the Executive Director.

### **II. Travel Expenses for Persons Attending Events on Behalf of the Straight Spouse Network**

A. The reimbursement of travel expenses to persons attending events on behalf of the Straight Spouse Network must be pre-authorized and approved by the Straight Spouse Network Executive Director.

B. Reimbursement and reporting procedures will follow the guidelines of the official Straight Spouse Network events.

Board of Directors\Policies\Travel Policy approved 2011-07-26.doc