

# **Standards for Sexual Attitude Reassessment Seminars**

## **Approved by AASECT BOD**

### **Effective Date January 1, 2022**

#### **Purpose**

The American Association of Sexuality Educators, Counselors and Therapists (AASECT) requires the completion of an attitudes/values training experience as part of the requirements for certification as an AASECT Certified Sex Educator, Counselor or Therapist. Certification candidates most often satisfy this requirement by participating in a Sexual Attitude Reassessment (SAR) seminar.

This document identifies guidelines and minimal criteria for the provision of SARs. The AASECT Certification and Professional Education Committees utilize these standards to qualify SARs as acceptable for completion of the attitudes/values training experience and awarding continuing education (CE) credits.

#### **SAR Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Statement**

The SAR process should be well informed by efforts in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI). AASECT is fully committed to DEI and social justice efforts, as is stated in the Strategic Plan (November 2019). This means that each SAR will be expected to be created with particular attention given to diverse representations of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic class, ability, orientation, age, and gender identity.

- SAR leaders should be well-trained and well-versed in DEI in the educational setting.
- SAR leaders should choose co-trainers and small group facilitators who are trained and well-versed in DEI.
- SAR materials, videos, films, speaker panels and research should be chosen as much as possible to represent diverse populations with respect to race, ethnicity, socioeconomic class, ability, gender/gender identity, age and orientation.
- SAR should be made as accessible as possible for various ability levels.
- SAR leaders and Providers may wish to consider offering scholarships or discounts for people in such groups who may not historically have had as much access to such training.

#### **Description**

A SAR is a process-oriented seminar that uses lecture, media, experiential methods, activities and small group discussions. The objective of a SAR is to give participants the opportunity to explore their attitudes, values, feelings and beliefs about sexual attitudes, behaviors and identities and how these impact their professional interactions. SAR is not a traditional academic experience to disseminate cognitive information, nor is it

psychotherapy directed toward the resolution of personal problems. It is a psycho-educational experience, and as such is a highly personal, internal exploration that will be different for each participant. Small group discussions have demonstrated efficacy in achieving this self-exploration and awareness and is essential to the SAR process. SAR is not primarily for therapists, or educators, or medical professionals, or any specific group. However, any individual SAR may be targeted for a specific group, and therefore may be tailored to that group's needs.

## **1. Qualifications of SAR Leaders**

SAR leaders are required to:

- Be a participant in at least two SARs, then serve as a co-leader or small group facilitator under the mentorship of an experienced leader prior to leading themselves.
- Have a command of all topic areas addressed in a SAR.
- Have experience and skills in large group and small group facilitation.
- Role model the skills defined by the learning objectives.
- Be fully committed to creating and facilitating the SAR through the lenses of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion with respect to race, ethnicity, ability, socioeconomic class, orientation and gender/gender identity.
- Meet with the small group facilitators prior to the SAR to review the following:
  - Role of the small group facilitator during large group sessions.
  - Role of the small group facilitator during small group meetings.
  - SAR agenda and topics to be covered.
  - Issues that might arise during specific activities or learning units
  - Instructions and guidelines for small group activities and discussion.
  - Process for handling complicated group problems and issues as they arise during the SAR.

### **Qualifications of SAR Small Group Facilitators**

Small group facilitators are required to:

- Have experience and skills in small group facilitation and/or training in group dynamics.
- Attend at least one SAR as a participant prior to serving as a facilitator.
- Role model the skills defined by the learning objectives.

- Be fully committed to creating and facilitating the SAR through the lenses of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion with respect to race, ethnicity, ability, socioeconomic class, orientation and gender/gender identity.
- View materials to be used in the SAR prior to the SAR
- Meet with the SAR leader prior to the SAR to review the following:
  - Role of the small group facilitator during large group sessions.
  - Role of the small group facilitator during small group meetings.
  - SAR agenda and topics to be covered.
  - Issues that might arise during specific activities or learning units
  - Instructions and guidelines for small group activities and discussion.
  - Process for handling complicated group problems and issues as they arise during the SAR.

## **2. Information for Prospective Participants**

SAR methodology differs from traditional teaching methods and the outcomes are not knowledge- based. Prospective participants must be given basic information about the SAR in writing in order to make an informed choice to participate. This is first given in publicity announcing the SAR (website, email, flyer, program announcement, etc.) Information to be given must include a general statement of the purpose, teaching methods, learning objectives, topics, the potential presence of sexually explicit media and language (including ability to opt out), duration, attendance and any additional requirements for completion.

### **Informed consent**

Program attendees must sign a consent form prior to attendance. It is preferred that attendees receive a copy of the informed consent prior to enrollment or registration in the program (signature can happen upon attendance). The consent form should inform the potential attendees of

- the focus of the SAR as personal reflection
- the presence of small group, facilitated discussion
- the presence of sexually explicit media, the purpose of sexually explicit media, and the option to decline viewing. If the SAR is heavily dependent on sexually explicit media, this should be clear in the consent form so that participants can make an informed decision about attending

- the confidentiality agreement

## **Program Goals**

The primary goals for participants attending SAR seminars are:

- To increase understanding of the wide spectrum of human sexual behaviors, identities and orientations (being mindful of diversity, equity and inclusion), followed by the opportunity to identify their attitudes, values, feelings and beliefs regarding these behaviors including topics of comfort and discomfort.
- To increase comfort when addressing and discussing a wide range of sexual topics encountered by the clinical or education professional.
- To promote non-judgmental and respectful attitudes toward others whose attitudes, values, feelings, beliefs and sexual behaviors differ from those of the SAR participant.

## **Required Topic Areas**

1. To meet AASECT standards, a SAR must be a minimum of 14 hours in length.
2. The SAR includes required topic areas, as well as elective subjects to be determined by the faculty when considering the needs of the participants.  
Required areas are

- Sexual discourse (discussion that includes sexual topics)
- Socio-cultural and intersectional considerations (including but not limited to gender, age, ability, economic class, race, ethnicity, religion, etc.)
- Sex & aging/sexual development
- Spectrum of Sexual orientation
- Varieties in sexual expressions and behaviors
- BDSM/Kink
- Spectrum of Gender Identities

- Sexual and reproductive anatomy variations
  - Sexuality and disability
  - Self-pleasuring/Masturbation
  - Consensual Non-Monogamy
3. SAR is expected to include presentation of topics that are current, balanced, accurate, and research-based.
    - a. At least 1 academic reference per CE is required.
    - b. Participants should be offered the references/resources as part of their materials.
  4. Small groups should address attitudes, values, and ethics about sexual behaviors, identities and orientations.
  5. SAR should be presented through an intersectional lens and all topics above must be covered with as much diversity of representation as possible with respect to race, class, gender identity, ability, sexual orientation and age.

6. Elective topics may include but are not limited to attitudes about:

STIs, HIV/AIDS	Touch	Body Image Celibacy
Safer sex	Religion/Spirituality	Sex & Technology
Sexual violence	Sexual development	Online sexuality
Sexually explicit media	Relationships/Intimacy	Fantasy
Paraphilias	Pregnancy/Childbirth	Group Sex
	Contraception/Abortion	

## **SAR Attendance and Participation Requirements Attendance**

SAR must be held live in-person or synchronously online. It cannot be held in pre-recorded or asynchronous format.

### **Confidentiality**

Personal exploration and sharing are generally enhanced by participant confidentiality. Therefore, a confidentiality contract should be established at the beginning of the SAR process. The leader and facilitators must ensure that that contract is carefully observed during the SAR and emphasize the importance of it being honored after the SAR.

### **Media**

A SAR is an integrated, sequential, graduated program. Therefore, participants are expected to attend all sessions of the SAR. A participant may elect to avoid viewing materials that are unduly emotionally laden or objectionable to them; however, participants are expected to attend all discussion sessions.

The purposes of SARs are enhanced by the use of media that is often emotionally evocative and/or sexually explicit. In the CE application, prospective SAR leaders should list the titles of the media to be used as part of the overall outline of the seminar. While this traditional SAR presentation method has demonstrated efficacy, there may be special circumstances where SAR leaders choose to use little or no media (or no sexually-explicit media). When this is the case, the CE credit application and outline must clearly demonstrate how the SAR objectives will be met and what alternative methodologies will be used. Leaders should consider the appropriateness of the media for the intended audience.

### **Discussion Groups**

During a SAR, participants are provided the opportunity to process responses to material and activities presented in the SAR. This is the time when personal reactions, attitudes, values, feelings and beliefs are shared and explored. There must be ample time given throughout the seminar for these discussion group sessions.

1. It is suggested that small groups be assigned at the beginning of the SAR, with a pre-assigned facilitator for each. The participants remain with the same group, meeting at various times throughout the SAR. Optimal group size should be gaged by the time allotted for each small group discussion, so that participants will each have an opportunity to share their thoughts or reactions. AASECT

suggests no more than 8 people per small group.

2. SAR small groups should focus on the personal responses of the participants to the material that has just been experienced/presented. This is to clarify attitudes, values, feelings and beliefs while minimizing professional distance as a defense against such reactions. In addition, participants are asked to listen carefully to similarities and differences in points of view among their small group members. By doing so, participants can gain an understanding of differing attitudes, values, feelings and beliefs towards the same content/experience.

## **Evaluation**

A participant evaluation form is required to measure the learning objectives and each participant's satisfaction with the process, leaders and logistics including venue.

## **Documentation of SAR Completion**

The sponsoring organization must provide a document of attendance (including the number of hours) to each attendee who met the requirements of SAR participation. Records of the SAR attendance sheets and learning objectives must be kept in a secure location for 7 years.