

VERA COUNSELING COLLECTIVE, PLLC

Couples Counseling Informed Consent



Effective July 2026

PLEASE READ BEFORE SIGNING

This agreement supplements Vera Counseling Collective's general informed consent and explains issues that are specific to couples and relationship counseling, including who participates in treatment, confidentiality, individual communications, records, insurance, and legal proceedings. Both participants should ask questions about anything they do not understand.

1. Scope and Purpose of Couples Counseling

Vera Counseling Collective, PLLC provides routine outpatient telehealth counseling to adults who are physically located in Arizona at the time of service. Couples counseling is intended to support the relationship and may address communication, conflict, emotional connection, trust, attachment patterns, intimacy, life transitions, parenting concerns, betrayal, decision-making, or other relationship goals.

Couples counseling is not emergency care, crisis response, medication management, medical treatment, legal advice, forensic evaluation, custody evaluation, or a substitute for a higher level of care. Participation is voluntary, and either participant may ask questions, request changes to the treatment approach, or end participation.

2. The Focus of Treatment

The primary focus of treatment is the relationship and the goals developed jointly with the clinician. The clinician does not serve as an advocate, investigator, judge, mediator, or individual therapist for either participant within the couples treatment.

When insurance is used, a payer may require one participant to be identified as the patient and may require a mental health diagnosis and documentation of medical necessity. This administrative designation does not change the clinician's intention to work fairly with both participants or make the identified participant solely responsible for the relationship concerns.

3. Assessment and Treatment Process

Treatment typically begins with an intake that reviews the relationship history, current concerns, strengths, safety, relevant individual histories, symptoms, prior treatment, and goals. The clinician may use questionnaires or structured relationship assessments and may recommend one or more individual meetings as part of the couples assessment.

Approaches may include Gottman-informed interventions, emotion-focused and attachment-based work, cognitive and behavioral strategies, trauma-informed care, communication and conflict-management skills, psychoeducation, mindfulness, and other clinically appropriate methods within the clinician's competence.

Possible benefits include clearer communication, stronger emotional connection, improved conflict management, increased insight, and more intentional decisions about the relationship. Results cannot be guaranteed. Couples counseling may also bring up painful emotions, conflict, disclosures, or decisions about separation, commitment, boundaries, or other significant changes.

4. Responsibilities of both participants

Both participants agree to:

- Participate honestly and respectfully, including communicating concerns about the treatment process.
- Avoid threats, intimidation, harassment, violence, property destruction, or behavior that makes treatment unsafe.
- Attend sessions from a private location and avoid recording, livestreaming, photographing, or allowing unapproved people to observe.
- Complete agreed-upon exercises or assessments when reasonably able.
- Inform the clinician of major changes affecting treatment, including separation, legal proceedings, safety concerns, or concurrent individual or couples treatment.
- Understand that the clinician cannot force either participant to remain in the relationship or guarantee reconciliation.

5. Confidentiality in Couples Counseling

Information shared in couples counseling is generally confidential and protected by applicable law, professional ethics, and the practice's Notice of Privacy Practices. Because more than one person participates, confidentiality is more complicated than in individual counseling.

The clinician will not ordinarily disclose information outside treatment without appropriate written authorization from the person or persons whose information is involved, except when disclosure is permitted or required by law. Limits may include suspected abuse or neglect, a serious and imminent threat, medical or psychiatric emergencies, valid legal demands after applicable protections are considered, licensing-board matters, and permitted treatment, payment, or health care operations.

6. Individual Sessions, Messages, and the Limited-Secrets Policy

IMPORTANT COUPLES POLICY

Vera Counseling Collective uses a limited-secrets policy. The clinician will not agree to hold information indefinitely when the clinician believes it is materially relevant to the couples treatment, the safety of a participant, or the integrity of the therapeutic process.

Either participant may share information during an individual assessment meeting, telephone call, email, portal message, or other communication. The clinician will use clinical judgment about whether and how that information should be addressed in the joint work.

The clinician will generally encourage the participant who shared significant information to disclose it directly to the other participant, with therapeutic support when appropriate. The clinician may set a reasonable timeframe for disclosure, pause joint sessions, recommend individual treatment, refer the couple to another provider, or end couples counseling if withholding the information makes fair and effective treatment impossible.

The clinician will not intentionally use private communications to create an alliance with one participant against the other. However, the clinician cannot guarantee that every individual communication will remain undisclosed within the couples treatment. Do not send information you expect the clinician to permanently conceal from the other participant.

7. Safety, Coercion, and Relationship Violence

Couples counseling may not be appropriate when there is ongoing violence, coercive control, stalking, intimidation, severe retaliation, or a level of fear that prevents honest participation. The clinician may meet individually with participants, complete additional safety assessments, recommend specialized services, develop a safety plan, pause joint sessions, or end couples treatment.

Disclosure of violence or coercion does not automatically mean joint treatment will continue. Safety takes priority over preserving the couples format. The clinician may also make reports or disclosures when required or permitted by law.

8. Clinical Records and Access

The practice will maintain a clinical record for the couples treatment. The record may contain information about both participants, including intake forms, assessments, diagnoses when applicable, treatment plans, progress notes, billing information, communications, authorizations, and other treatment-related documents.

A request for the couples record may affect the privacy interests of both participants. The practice may require written authorization from both participants before releasing a joint record, unless disclosure is otherwise permitted or required by law. The practice may also limit, redact, summarize, or decline portions of a request when permitted by law, including information about another person, separately maintained psychotherapy notes, or information whose release could create a significant safety concern.

Neither participant should assume that the complete couples record will be released to one participant upon request. Questions about access should be directed to Kaiti Williams, LPC.

9. Privilege and Legal proceedings

Communications in behavioral health treatment may be legally privileged, but privilege in couples counseling can be complicated because more than one participant is involved. One participant may not be able to unilaterally control or waive all rights relating to a joint treatment record. The effect of privilege depends on the facts and applicable law.

Vera Counseling Collective, PLLC provides treatment, not forensic services. The clinician will not provide custody evaluations, parenting-time recommendations, legal decision-making opinions, assessments of who is truthful or at fault, or expert opinions for divorce, custody, civil, criminal, employment, or disability proceedings.

Both participants agree not to ask the clinician to advocate for either person, write letters supporting one participant's legal position, or voluntarily participate in litigation. This agreement cannot prevent a third party from issuing a subpoena or court order. If a legal demand is received, the clinician may seek legal consultation, assert confidentiality or privilege protections, notify participants when legally permitted, and charge fees described in the Financial Policy.

10. Concurrent Individual Therapy and Role Conflicts

The clinician may recommend that one or both participants receive individual therapy from a different provider. Separate individual therapy can support issues that require privacy or a different treatment focus.

The couples clinician will generally not become the ongoing individual therapist for one participant while also providing couples counseling. After couples treatment ends, the clinician may decline to treat either participant individually when doing so could create a conflict of interest, harm either participant, compromise neutrality, or misuse information learned in the couples work.

If either participant has another therapist, coordination will occur only with appropriate authorization or as otherwise permitted by law.

11. Telehealth

Sessions are provided through telehealth. Each participant must be physically located in Arizona, or another jurisdiction where the clinician is legally authorized to practice, at the time of the session. Each participant agrees to provide identity, physical location, and local emergency information when requested.

- Attend from a reasonably private and safe location and take steps to prevent others from overhearing.
- Do not drive or operate a vehicle during the session.

- Do not record or permit an unapproved person to attend.
- Notify the clinician if privacy, safety, or technology becomes inadequate.
- Understand that if technology fails, the clinician may reconnect, call, reschedule, or use another approved method.

12. Emergencies and Crisis Services

Vera Counseling Collective does not provide emergency, crisis-response, or 24-hour on-call services. Do not use email, text, voicemail, or the portal for emergencies. Call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department for immediate danger or a medical or psychiatric emergency. You may also call or text 988 for the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.

In Maricopa County, the 24/7 Central Arizona Crisis Line may be reached at (602) 222-9444 or (800) 631-1314.

13. Scheduling, Fees, Insurance, and Financial Responsibility

The current private-pay fee is \$175 for the initial intake and \$150 for an ongoing 45-60 minute couples session. Fees may differ when insurance or another written agreement applies.

Before services begin, both participants will receive or be given access to Vera Counseling Collective's Financial Policy and Additional Fee Schedule. That policy explains payment, card-on-file requirements, insurance billing, late cancellations, missed appointments, balances, refunds, administrative services, records, and legal-related fees. It is incorporated into this agreement.

Insurance coverage for couples counseling varies and is not guaranteed. A plan may cover treatment only when one participant meets criteria for a covered diagnosis and couples sessions are considered part of that person's treatment. The person designated as financially responsible remains responsible for deductibles, copayments, coinsurance, denied claims, noncovered services, and other balances described in the Financial Policy.

14. Communication Between Sessions

Email, text, telephone, voicemail, and portal messaging are primarily for scheduling, forms, billing, and brief administrative communication. They are not appropriate for emergencies or extended couples conflict. Messages from one participant may become part of the joint clinical record and may be addressed in treatment under the limited-secrets policy.

The clinician ordinarily responds within two business days, excluding weekends, holidays, planned absences, and times of announced unavailability.

15. Artificial intelligence and technology

The practice may use approved electronic systems for scheduling, billing, secure communication, record storage, and documentation. Human clinical judgment remains the basis for assessment, diagnosis, treatment planning, risk assessment, and treatment decisions.

Any use of the SimplePractice AI Note Taker is governed by a separate consent. Either participant may decline or withdraw that separate consent as described in the AI Note Taker Consent.

16. Ending or Changing Couples Treatment

Either participant may end participation at any time. The clinician may recommend pausing, transferring, or ending couples counseling when treatment goals have been met; the format is no longer beneficial or safe; needs exceed the clinician's scope; neutrality is compromised; attendance or payment policies are not followed; significant information is being withheld; one participant is using therapy to intimidate, monitor, or retaliate against the other; or another circumstance prevents lawful, ethical, and effective treatment.

When clinically appropriate and safe, the clinician will discuss the decision and provide referrals or recommendations. Availability of another provider, insurance participation, or continued services cannot be guaranteed.

17. Documents Incorporated into this Agreement

By signing, each participant acknowledges receiving or being offered access to:

- Vera Counseling Collective's general Informed Consent for Outpatient Counseling Services.
- Notice of Privacy Practices.
- Financial Policy and Additional Fee Schedule.
- Emergency Contact and Crisis Response Authorization.
- AI Note Taker Consent, when applicable.

18. Acknowledgment and consent

By signing below, each participant confirms that they have read this agreement, had an opportunity to ask questions, understand the couples-specific confidentiality and limited-secrets policy, and voluntarily consent to participate in couples counseling under these terms.

Participant 1 full legal name	Participant 2 full legal name
Preferred name	Preferred name
Date of birth	Date of birth
Signature	Signature
Date	Date
Financially responsible person:	Relationship status (optional):