**A guide to ethical decision-making**

***Overview and Rationale:***

There is a responsibility as journalists to be aware of how our actions (publishing material) can impact those around us. Maintaining an ethical approach to journalism is crucial to building trust and credibility. Ethical decision-making means journalists are taking the time to identify the benefits and consequences of their actions.

***Goals for understanding:***

What is ethical decision-making?

How do we make ethical decisions?

What challenges will you have to maneuver?

***Overviews and Timeline:***

*Activity 1 (One 50-minute class)*

Identify the key principles of ethical decision-making based on the [NSPA Code of Ethics](http://studentpress.org/nspa/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2016/04/wheel_modelcodeofethics.pdf). What makes these principles important as we proceed in our roles a journalist? In small groups, pick three principles to analyze. How do they play a role in ethics?

* *Be Responsible.*
* *Be Fair.*
* *Be Honest.*
* *Be Accurate.*
* *Be Independent.*
* *Minimize Harm.*
* *Be Accountable.*

In small groups, pick three principles to analyze. How do they play a role in ethics?

How do they play a role in this example: You’re given a story about a juvenile who is suspected of breaking into a classroom and damaging property. Police give you surveillance video of the break-in. How do you plan on publishing the video, if at all?

*Activity 2 (One 50-minute classes)*

Develop a plan (go through each of the seven key principals) using the NSPA Code of Ethics to handle the case issue below:

*CASE:*

*A source that does not want to be named has given you a tip that the mayor’s son was arrested last night. He tells you there is no police report at this time and it won’t likely be finished until the morning. But your editor is pushing you to publish the story, given that you’ve worked with the source below. What is the ethical approach to this situation? How would you handle it?*

Go through each principle and identify how it plays a role in your decision. Answer the following questions:

* What is the ethical question?
* What issues do you see if you were to publish only the source’s information?
* Is there an alternative answer to publishing material? List them.