Anonymous Sources Policy

When, if at all, should you use confidential sources? Confidential, or unnamed sources should be avoided if possible, to maintain transparency within the publication. There are instances where a source may request confidentiality due to the sensitive nature of the information. In those cases, follow the process below to help you determine when it may be acceptable to use unnamed sources.

Navigating the use of unnamed sources

ACTIVITY: Follow the process above to help identify whether or not you should use the unnamed source in the example below.

STORY: You’ve received an email from a student who claims that there is a group of students who are selling vaping products during school hours. Vaping and tobacco products are prohibited on campus. The anonymous student claims the transactions happen throughout the school day, but is unable to give you a specific timeframe. The anonymous source names the students involved. Several rumors have surfaced related to the transactions and vaping in restrooms. Several students confirm the student’s claims but do not want their name published out of fear. What do you do? Would you publish the student’s claims?

Follow the process below and write your answers/findings in the chart below. Once completed, explain why or when you would decide to publish the claims made by the anonymous student.