**Code of Ethics:**

The foundation of journalism is focused on accuracy, truth and integrity. Making ethical decisions begins with thoughtful decision making when gathering information and publishing material.

[***Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) Code of Ethics***](https://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Unverified Information | - Before publishing, determine the information’s validity by checking additional sources and retrieving on-the-record confirmation through official sources or public records.    - Is this information that should be shared with your readers? Why or why not? |
| Anonymous/Confidential Sources | When should you use confidential sources?    - Is the story of public concern or interest?    - Is it the only way to get the information?    - Does the source have an ulterior motive?    - Is the confidential source providing information that can be verified or fact-checked?    Confidential sources should be used as a journalist’s last option due to the nature of the sensitive information. |
| Fair, accurate reporting | - Does the story include both side of an issue?    - Have both sides been given equal time to respond?    - Are you transparent with readers on your attempts to reach both sides?    - Are you transparent in the way you have gathered information?    - Have you corrected any mistakes that may have appeared after publication? |
| Plagiarism, Fabrication | - Make sure to verify your quotes and information is accurate and is given the appropriate credit and source.    - Just because a source was quoted saying something, doesn’t make it a FACT. Verify the information before publishing and determine its validity. |
| Minimize Harm | Understand the scope and power of what you publish:  - Identify the news value and the impact the story will have on others, including victims of a crime.  - Make ethical decisions when it comes to publishing names of juveniles (under the age of 18). The severity of the crime may impact your decision, but you should consider giving juveniles special attention and protection based on their age.  - <https://rtdna.org/content/identifying_juveniles> |
| Conflicts of Interests | It’s your responsibility as a journalist to act independently.  - Avoid gifts, favors or other items as it could be looked at as a conflict of interest. If there’s a conflict that you can’t avoid, be transparent with your audience. |