

WBUR Ethics Guide

WBUR journalists are professionals who bring knowledge, skills and commitment to serve the public and the public interest. Our journalism is built on a foundation of accuracy, fairness and inclusion. Our decision-making is guided by rigor, transparency and independence. Our journalists are honest and respectful. We are accountable for our actions and our reporting.

These guiding ethical principles are aspirational. They do not provide answers to every journalistic and ethical issue we encounter. They do provide us with a moral compass. They spotlight our duty. They encourage us to ask hard questions of ourselves, to discuss and debate with colleagues, and to reach carefully reasoned decisions. They challenge us to strive for excellence in our work.

This is a living document and shall be revisited periodically and revised as needed. These principles are supported by a series of guidelines that offer more specific information to help us make sound decisions. We will strive to be transparent and explain ethical decisions as they apply to these guidelines so others can learn from those experiences. Those lessons are important for all WBUR journalists and may also at times be valuable for our audience or other stakeholders.

[The NPR Ethics Handbook](#) is a primary source for WBUR's editorial guidelines and the documents share language and guidelines. Other sources include news ethics guidelines from other public media and professional journalism organizations.

Who Is Covered And Why

Anyone who produces journalism for WBUR or on behalf of WBUR is covered by WBUR's Guiding Ethical Principles. This includes WBUR employees as well as freelancers and contributors for the period that they are on assignment or otherwise producing editorial work for WBUR.

Commentators, analysts, critics and opinion writers who provide original editorial content for WBUR are expected to adhere to WBUR's guiding principles regarding honesty, respect, accuracy, fairness, independence and interdependence in the work that they produce. As just one example, contributors need to disclose to their editor any conflicts of interest, as further

addressed in the [Independence and Interdependence guiding principle](#). At the same time, these contributors often provide unique perspective, expertise and opinion, and as such may take public positions on issues in their work that would not be appropriate for members of the editorial staff.

WBUR will provide freelancers, contributors and collaborators with these guidelines so they may understand our values and standards. It is the responsibility of editors and other journalists supervising commissioned work to oversee the reporting process of freelancers and contributors to ensure it is in keeping with WBUR's standards.

These guidelines are designed specifically for editorial staff, however these principles should be understood and respected by all WBUR staff, who should be mindful that they represent WBUR.

We do not expect the public to differentiate between editorial and non-editorial staff, and we expect all employees to protect and respect the public trust and credibility we hold precious.

Guiding Principles

Accuracy

We devote our resources and our skills to presenting the fullest version of the truth possible. In this mission, we seek and include a diversity of voices, experiences and points of view. We are rigorous in our reporting and diligent in our verification. We take great care to ensure that statements of fact in our journalism are both correct and in context. We strive for precision and seek to be comprehensive and inclusive. We place the greatest value on information we have gathered and verified ourselves. We challenge the claims we encounter and we test the assumptions we bring.

Accuracy in reporting and interviewing

Accuracy is at the core of our journalism. Neither time pressure nor the complexity of a story excuse errors. We do our best to ensure that everything we report faithfully depicts reality – from the tiniest detail to the big-picture context that helps put the news into perspective.

We diligently seek subjects of news coverage to understand their perspective and to allow them to respond to criticism or allegations of wrongdoing. We systematically review and edit our work before making our reporting public. We prosecute our assumptions and we address any conflicts of interest that could undermine the integrity of our reporting, in reality or perception.

During live coverage, whether on air or online, when robust editing isn't possible, it is incumbent upon us to rely on the facts that are known to us and to safeguard against opinion or speculation.

We identify sources clearly and we explain to our audience why, in rare instances, anonymity or confidentiality was granted to sources.

Guideline: Correct errors quickly and transparently.

When we make errors of substance, we are accountable and transparent. We acknowledge mistakes and correct them promptly. We do not hide or cover up our mistakes.

We explain corrections and clarifications on those platforms where the corrections and clarifications best serve our listeners and readers. Consider where else the error could be repeated, and, if possible, averted — e.g. on social media, in newsletters, on podcasts or other on-demand platforms. Often the digital version of a story serves as the lasting archive (and searchable) version of a story and so is the appropriate place to correct the record.

Example: If we misidentify a subject's age in a report, a correction appended to the digital version of the story would suffice without the need for an on-air correction. If we erroneously report someone being accused of a crime, we should correct the record on air and anywhere else the incorrect information was reported.

Guideline: Edit like a prosecutor.

Excellent and ethical journalism comes in part from the collaborative efforts of hosts, reporters, editors, producers and photographers who all play a key role in ensuring accuracy. Good journalists must be good prosecutors. So, we test, probe and challenge, always with the goal of making WBUR's stories as accurate and precise as possible.

Guideline: Identify the source of each fact you report.

Identify sources clearly. The public is entitled to as much information as possible to judge the reliability and motivations of sources. When making a general assertion of fact in a story, the reporter and editor should be able to immediately identify the source and explain why that person or organization is credible and authoritative.

This is essential to the editing process and it also enables us to stand by our reporting in a clear and convincing way if a story comes under question. We should never be in the position of looking for corroboration after a report has been published or broadcast.

Guideline: Guard against subjective errors.

Ensuring we have our factual details correct is only part of the accuracy equation. It's just as important to make sure we've correctly interpreted those facts in our reporting. The burden is on us to ensure that the way we use the material we collect is true to its intended meaning and context. When quoting or paraphrasing anyone, consider whether the source would agree with the interpretation, keeping in mind that sources may sometimes parse their words even though we accurately capture their meaning. An actuality from someone we interview or a speaker at an event should reflect accurately what that person was asked, was responding to or was addressing.

Guideline: Include a diversity of perspectives to enhance accuracy in stories.

We tell stronger, better-informed stories when we include a variety of perspectives on what we're covering. The best reporting draws on experts, influential figures and laypeople from across the demographic and experience spectrum.

For example, a story about the impact of unemployment on the greater Boston area might accurately state percentages of the overall population who are unemployed, underemployed or who have left the workforce. However those macro statistics might not ring true for certain groups based on race, gender, age or socio-economics.

Different vantage points and different populations could produce very different information that would provide a more nuanced and accurate news report. True insight and accurate coverage comes from our efforts to include a diversity of experience and voices.

Guideline: We give preference to WBUR original sources.

We value our own reporting and fact gathering over that done by other news outlets. We strongly prefer to confirm and verify information ourselves. When reporting on events we did not witness personally, we seek multiple independent perspectives to get a sharper, more accurate understanding of what happened.

If we can't verify what others are reporting, but still believe the news is important and needs to be reported, we tell listeners and readers that WBUR has not yet independently confirmed the news.

Too often, incorrect information is passed down from one news report and sources to another because of the failure of the first outlet to get it right. We strive to scrutinize and avoid passing on inaccurate information.

We must be aware of the reporting pitfall of verifying "facts" through other news outlets that do not have direct knowledge about the information they're reporting.

Guideline: Attribute everything.

Be very clear where we've gotten our information, or where the organization we give credit to has gotten its information. Every WBUR reporter and editor should be able to immediately identify the source of any facts in our stories — and why we consider them credible. And every reader or listener should know where we got our information. "Media reports" or "sources say" is not good enough. Be specific.

Also, in cases where stories are developing and the news may be changing from moment to moment, state clearly what WBUR has and has not been able to confirm on its own and what key questions remain unanswered.

Guideline: Anonymous sources diminish accuracy.

Occasionally in the course of our reporting, sources will agree to share information only if it's not attributed to them. WBUR journalists should use their good judgment to determine whether the information merits such a decision. However, we do not begin our quest for interviews by promising to keep a source anonymous or off the record. Our goal is to get as much information as possible on the record.

In rare cases where we protect a source's identity, we must describe that source as clearly as we can without identifying them, as well as the reason for protecting their identity.

Guideline: Determine if the source is credible, reliable, and knowledgeable.

In rare cases, we use information from anonymous sources to tell important stories that otherwise would go unreported. This is not a solo decision – the editors and producers of these stories must be satisfied that the source is credible and reliable, and that there is a substantial journalistic justification for using information from the source without attribution. This requires both deciding whether it is editorially justified to let the person speak anonymously, and being satisfied that this person is who they claim to be and that they are credibly in a position to have the information they are revealing. We should never be in the position of having to verify these things after a story has been broadcast or published.

Guideline: Consult with senior news leaders to determine if anonymity is warranted.

Individual WBUR journalists — reporters, producers and others — do not on their own have the authority to assure any source that information they give us anonymously will be reported. Approval must come from a senior news leader. As the level of importance regarding the information rises, so should the level of editor who is pulled into the conversation. There is no hard-and-fast rule. When in doubt, editors should always err on the side of caution and run issues up the next step in the chain of command. If a reporter and editor know ahead of time that a key interview can only be done if the source is granted anonymity, they must seek the approval of the executive editor for news or the executive producer for the national shows and podcasts.

Guideline: No disguises.

We may withhold a source's name who talks to us on tape or on the record, if that individual might be put in danger, legal jeopardy or face some other serious threat if their name is revealed. Instead, we use pronouns and descriptions to make clear who is speaking or whom we're referring to. We may refer to the person without using a last name, if he or she is comfortable with that degree of anonymity and if we decide the situation meets our criteria for granting anonymity. But we don't use pseudonyms to replace their real name. Our job is to present factual – not fabricated – information. [See here for more on anonymity guidelines.](#)

On rare occasions, we may need to further protect sources by concealing their voices, either through audio manipulation or by having an actor read the direct quotes. These decisions need to be made in consultation with the executive editor for news or the executive producers for the national shows and podcasts.

Guideline: Accuracy comes first when reporting breaking news.

In breaking news situations, timeliness and accuracy can be in conflict. We must be judicious, for the stakes can be great. It is always wise to ask: What does our audience need to know? Why do they need to know? When do they need to know?

In some situations, the information is exceptionally important and the audience needs that information immediately. We do our best to give clear, cogent and correct reporting, even before

we've had a chance to thoroughly vet the information. We must be transparent and state what we're certain of, what we don't yet know and how our information was acquired.

In other situations, the timeliness and the importance of the information are trumped by accuracy concerns. Wrong information could be much more harmful than delayed reporting. We should always be willing to hold back momentarily to gather more information and verify key facts. If we do present inaccurate information in a breaking story, we not only damage our reputation but we can cause harm to those who are affected by the event or who might act upon our erroneous information.

And, if we have information that might cause significant grief (to a victim's family, for example) or might potentially put someone in harm's way, we do not report it until it's been thoroughly verified and senior news leaders have given their approval.

When news is breaking, we ideally rely on our own reporting. However, we may need to pass along information reported by others because the public should know about it immediately. This is particularly true when safety is an issue. In all cases, take special care in using information from wire service stories, reports by other news organizations, or online content that may not be coming from a reputable source. And of course always cite where the information is coming from.

Guideline: Live and real-time reporting must measure up to the same accuracy standards.

The public deserves the same rigor and commitment to accuracy when we are reporting information "live" - whether that is on air, online or on any other real-time platform.

Preparation for these situations is key, and journalists should be knowledgeable about their subjects in order to vet information and provide context in real time to the best of our abilities. In cases where accuracy would be sacrificed for the sake of speed, it is wise to slow down. A brief delay is better than an erroneous report. It is a red herring defense to suggest we can incrementally get the story correct with continuous updates; the harm will have already occurred if inaccurate information is broadcast or published as part of incremental updated coverage even when corrected in followup reports.

Guideline: Confront interviewees who lie or bend the truth.

It is an obligation of journalists to hold the powerful accountable. When an interviewee fails to tell the truth or conveys misinformation, it is our responsibility to challenge the statements. There is legitimate news value in respectfully and precisely contesting questionable or outright false information as it occurs.

Hosts and reporters should be prepared in knowledge and skill to probe and push, particularly when it comes to live interviews. In some cases where we have good reason to believe an interviewee will not be honest, it's wise to thoroughly research the subject and previous statements, in order to appropriately challenge the interviewee.

In some situations it may be best to pre-tape interviews to enable appropriate editing and fact-checking to protect the accuracy of our reporting and to ensure we are not manipulated by those who seek to mislead or deceive our audience.

There can be editorial value in interviewing those individuals who may be known for stretching or defying the truth in order to hold them accountable for their views. These are high-stakes environments and extra precaution is warranted. These are special circumstances, and we should think carefully about interviewing individuals with a pattern of lying or otherwise operating in bad faith.

Guideline: Take special care with news that might cause grief or damage reputations.

Any falsehoods in our news reports can cause harm. But errors that may damage reputations or bring about grief are especially fraught, and extra precautions should be taken to avoid them. We don't report an individual's death, for example, until it has been confirmed by authoritative sources and we're certain the family is aware. In those cases (whether on air or on social media) err on the side of caution and when unsure get clearance from the appropriate senior news leader.

Guideline for accuracy on social media: Be a journalist. Don't spread unverified information. Be careful and skeptical.

When determining whether to pass along information reported on social media sites by other news outlets or individuals, be thoughtful and judicious. When we point to what others are reporting, in the eyes of many we are effectively reporting that information ourselves.

But we also know that reporting about what's being posted on social media can provide our listeners and readers valuable insights into what is unfolding in the news.

One key is to be transparent about what we're doing. We tell readers what has and hasn't been confirmed. Our same standards for anonymous sources apply in social media, and we must be diligent about citation, particularly in breaking news environments. We challenge those putting information out on social media to provide evidence before we are comfortable reporting the information ourselves. We raise doubts and ask questions when we have concerns — sometimes "knocking down" rumors circulating on social media is of enormous value to our audience. Always ask an important question: am I about to spread an unverified rumor or am I passing on valuable and credible information in a transparent manner with appropriate caveats?

Above all, proceed with caution, especially when news is breaking and accounts vary widely about what is happening. Reach out to other sources for confirmation. And the general standard is simple: Tweet and retweet as if what you're saying or passing along is information that you would put on the air or online. If it needs context, attribution, clarification or "knocking down," provide it.

Always make clear to listeners and readers what has been obtained from our original reporting and what we've found posted in social media outlets. And to the greatest practical extent, spell out how the information was checked and why we consider the sources credible.

And when in doubt, consult with your supervisor and a senior news leader.

Guideline: Verify the authenticity of your source.

It's often easier to falsify one's identity online than it is offline. And tonal or contextual nuances can be lost in online exchanges. So when appropriate, clarify and confirm information collected online through phone or in-person interviews. For example, when a social media posting is itself news, try to contact the source to confirm the origin of the information and attain a better understanding of its meaning.

Accuracy in visual journalism

The images and graphics we use to tell our stories assist us in our pursuit of the truth. Some guidelines are simple: Captions and labels must accurately describe the details and the events in the images they accompany. The same is true of the information we present online in graphics.

Some visual content is more subjective and requires more judgment: Be fair to the people in photos and honest with our viewers. Use images to convey information and tell stories, not to make the subjects look better or worse than the facts warrant. Be cautious when using archive or file photography to ensure the photographs are in proper context and that the captions are accurate.

Likewise, our graphics present information in ways that educate and illuminate. We do not skew data to mislead viewers about an issue or event.

Guideline: Take care in using images that have been posted online.

Increasingly, individuals who are not journalists are posting photos and videos online. Some of these may hold news value and would be relevant to our audience.

But images can be manipulated. Old video can be reposted and made to appear as if it's new. Photos or video taken in one part of the world can be repackaged and portrayed as being from somewhere else. It is our duty to determine the accuracy and authenticity of any image before publishing it, never more so than when it is a photo or video taken by someone who is not a WBUR journalist. There are legal and copyright issues to consider in addition to the ethical issues. Always consult with a digital news manager before publishing these images, and when in doubt about an image, don't use it.

More resources:

[First Draft's guide for verifying photos and videos.](#)

[The National Press Photographers Association's code of ethics.](#)

Fairness

Fairness is at the core of excellent and ethical journalism. To tell the truest story possible, it is essential that we treat those we interview and report on with scrupulous fairness, guided by a spirit of professionalism. We seek responses from those who are the subjects of criticism, unfavorable allegations or other negative assertions in our stories. What we report is edited for time, space and clarity. Those are realities, not excuses for error. When we quote, edit or otherwise report what people tell us, we aim to be faithful to their meaning, so our stories ring true to those we interview. In all our stories, especially matters of controversy, we strive to consider the strongest arguments, seeking to deliver both nuance and clarity. Our goal is not to please the people we report on or to produce stories that create the appearance of balance, but to seek the truth.

Fairness in presenting the news

We have unique and essential obligations as journalists, with duties unlike any other professionals. We gather, edit and report the news to inform and educate the public about significant issues, developments and events.

We report for the public, not our sources. Our primary consideration when presenting the news is that truth is our guide.

We treat our sources justly, respectfully and without discrimination or favoritism. However, if our sources try to mislead us or put a false spin on the information they provide, we hold them accountable, verify the facts and reveal the truth.

We fully identify our sources with rare exceptions and only after a rigorous vetting process and approval by senior news leadership.

We strive to give our audience confidence that we have rigorously considered multiple points of view and relevant context in our reporting process. Our goal is the pursuit of truth, thus we avoid framing fairness as simplistic balance. Fairness is about proper consideration and not necessarily about equal time or equal weight in a story. If the evidence in a matter of controversy weighs heavily on one side, we acknowledge it in our reports. We scrupulously avoid the trap of “false equivalency” in our reporting.

We stick to facts and to language that is clear, compelling and neutral. We emphasize context and clarity. We avoid “loaded” words preferred by a particular side in a debate. We write and speak in ways that will illuminate issues, not inflame them.

We acknowledge that we personally hold opinions and beliefs, but we consciously avoid allowing these to bias our decision-making and prejudice our reporting. WBUR journalists are

vigilant about recognizing and revealing if we find ourselves unable to be journalistically fair in our work. Supervising editors and executive producers are ultimately responsible for addressing conflicts of interest and concerns over bias or potential bias.

Guideline: Present facts, not indictments.

The "court of public opinion" is an expression, not a legal forum. When a person or company has been charged with wrongdoing by official sources, we must carefully avoid presenting facts in a manner that presumes guilt. When covering legal cases, always tell our listeners and readers if the defendant has entered a plea. Be scrupulous about accurately using words such as "arrested," "charged," "indicted" and other legal terms.

Guideline: Help our sources understand our work.

Reporters and hosts must make sure that an interview subject or guest knows when an interview has begun and when it has ended. There should be no question about the distinction regarding what is or isn't for broadcast, and what is on the record and what is not on the record.

Guideline: Our sources shouldn't be surprised by how they're represented.

No one we interview should be surprised by what they hear or read themselves saying. The conversation and quotes should "ring true" to them. That's why WBUR hosts, producers, and reporters make sure that the people we speak with know what they say will be edited — and that we will strive to be true to the meaning of their words.

"You don't want guests to be shocked — or feel they were misled — when they hear themselves on the air and discover that most of what they said has been cut out," former NPR Editor Jonathan Kern writes in Sound Reporting.

Former All Things Considered host Robert Siegel says that when he's recording an interview for broadcast later, "I inform people that this is not live, that it will be edited and that we will talk longer than what will be broadcast on the air." He also makes sure the guest knows about how long the edited conversation will end up being. "And I say that if you make a factual error, or I do, tell us and we will ask the question again."

Telling someone that we will be editing an interview does not, obviously, give us the right to do just anything. We "exercise good judgment ... [and] consider the editorial ramifications of the editing process," Kern says.

We must practice "ethical editing" to ensure the meaning remains true to the original intent.

If you have any doubt about what a person you interviewed meant, speak with them before broadcast or publication to prevent any misunderstandings. This should not be misconstrued as "quote approval," but rather when we encounter uncertainty, it is our responsibility to seek clarity. We **should** recheck facts and elements of a story we are citing to sources. We should not share our full reports with sources before we share them with the public.

Guideline: Be fair to our sources.

If we're perceived as being unfair we not only risk losing the trust of our audience, we also put our reporting at risk. All individuals we report on should be able to trust that we'll be fair not just in how we present their views, but in how we seek those views. This means we give those whom we cover the opportunity to respond to critical allegations in our reports, or to explain themselves when we suspect they've given us inaccurate information.

When sources — even those involved in some of the most controversial issues of the day — trust that we're fair and honest, our work benefits and so does our audience.

Guideline: Give sources time to respond.

If our audience wonders what someone we report about had to say in his or her defense, and we haven't provided that information or explained our efforts to get their reaction and point of view, we have failed.

When we seek such responses, we give the subjects a reasonable amount of time to get back to us and multiple ways to do so (phone numbers, e-mail addresses, etc.). What we consider "a reasonable amount of time" will vary depending on the situation, determined after a thorough discussion involving the reporter and/or producer and appropriate editors.

When news is breaking, make sure the people we're attempting to reach know about our deadlines — for the next newscast or the next program, for example.

If, despite our best efforts, we cannot get a response but determine that we need to go ahead with the story, cull past reports, documents and statements to pull out any previous comments made by the subject or organization that may help explain their positions. Look for credible proxies who may be able to defend their side. And tell our listeners and readers about our attempts to contact the subjects.

Guideline: No anonymous attacks.

Anonymous sources should not be allowed to attack or praise others in our reports. They generally cannot make pejorative comments about the character, reputation, or personal qualities of another individual, or derogatory statements about an institution. We don't use such material in our stories.

While we recognize that some valuable information can only be obtained off the record, it is unfair to air a source's opinion on a subject of coverage when the source's identity and motives are shielded from scrutiny.

Guideline: Describe anonymous sources for our audience.

When a decision is made to use information that we have obtained from a source that must remain anonymous, we describe in as much detail as we can, without revealing so much that

we effectively identify that person. We describe how the source knows this information, their motivations, and any other biographical details that will help our audience evaluate the source's credibility. At the same time, we should be clear with our sources how we are describing them, and be cautious of "jigsaw identification" in which someone (e.g. an employer) could identify the source by the details being shared. To help us in this pursuit, we should seek to understand from our sources who they are seeking anonymity from -- the public? A boss? A family member?

It is never enough to say "WBUR has learned" something. It is not enough to report that "officials say" something, or that some detail is "reportedly" true. If it is important for listeners or readers to know, for example, what political party the source is from, we report that information. If it is important to know what agency the source is from, we report that. If it is important to know which side of an issue the source represents, we report that. We push to get as much detail as we can about how the source knows this information, and to get the source's agreement to report as much of that detail as possible. Was she in the room when the meeting happened? Does he have a copy of the report? Did he participate in the investigation?

Guideline: When you cite the sources of others, attribute clearly.

When we attribute information to anonymous sources, it is assumed that these are our sources and that we have obtained the information firsthand from them. If this is not the case, and we are referring to reports in other news outlets based on anonymous sources of theirs, we are meticulous about attributing the information to those other outlets and we describe as fully as possible who those sources are, and how they know their information.

Guideline: Avoid the "off the record" trap.

Although WBUR journalists do agree to talk to sources on background when necessary, our strong preference is to have sources stay "on the record." Before any unattributed information is reported, reporters must make every reasonable effort to get it on the record — if not from that source, then from somewhere else. Remember, it's the journalist, not the source, who determines when it's appropriate to go "off the record."

Guideline: Our word is binding when making promises to sources.

As an ethical matter, when we make a promise to a source, we will keep it. Therefore we take any promise of anonymity seriously, and we should first ensure that we are able to keep that promise. We inform the source about the limits of legal protections, and expect the source to be honest with us.

Consult with editorial leadership, and if deemed necessary, with legal counsel (BU's Office of the General Counsel and WBUR's outside counsel) before you make a promise of confidentiality. Discuss whether the promise is necessary, what the exact scope of confidentiality will be, under what conditions the source might be willing to release you from the promise, and what the potential risks to you or WBUR might be.

Keep in mind that the legal protection provided to journalists to keep source identities, outtakes, or other confidential information secret is not 100% secure. Courts can attempt to compel journalists to testify or reveal information even when confidentiality has been promised, and refusal to reveal the information can result in jail time or fines. It is therefore possible that if journalists make a promise of confidentiality, but are later compelled to testify, they may either be jailed or ordered to pay damages. For those reasons, WBUR journalists must not promise confidentiality before discussing the issue with their editors, editorial leadership, and potentially, our legal team. It is critical to determine if confidentiality is necessary for the reporting and to weigh the potential risks. We want to make sure we can support and protect WBUR journalists in these tricky scenarios.

Guideline: Press anonymous sources hard.

Before we rely on information from anonymous sources, we press them hard on exactly what they know and how they know it. Our goal is to tell listeners and readers as much as we can about why this person is being quoted.

So, for example, "a senior State House official who was at the meeting and heard what the governor said," is the type of language we use. "An official" is not.

Guideline: Consider requests to remove names from WBUR's archive individually, and hold a high bar.

The public's interest and individual privacy are often in conflict, and the merits of each may shift over time. The permanence of the internet and the ubiquity of search place a new ethical responsibility on news organizations. News value may fade over time, but a digital story is indelible.

WBUR has a responsibility to report the truth. But it also recognizes that some of its published archive may be incomplete, out of date, or irrelevant. This is particularly the case when it comes to stories involving criminal justice. Crimes may spark initial news interest and coverage, but news organizations don't always follow the adjudication of crimes through to their ultimate disposition. In general, we should be wary of identifying people (by name or in photos) suspected or charged in low-level crimes at all, absent a compelling reason ([see more from the Associated Press](#)).

There may be other scenarios in which information published by WBUR causes harm to individuals that outweigh news relevance. For instance, targets of online harassment campaigns may seek to have photos or information removed from stories.

Sometimes requests can be handled with updates to an old story (and headline). In some rare cases, WBUR may consider removing information or names from published stories. WBUR will consider a variety of factors, including the news value of the information, how recently it was published, the age of the person and their role (for instance, WBUR is unlikely to remove information involving public officials).

A committee including the executive editors for news and digital as well as no fewer than two other journalists will meet regularly to review requests for removal from WBUR's published archive. As much as possible, the committee will include the original story's reporters and editors in arriving at a decision. If information is removed or updated, the committee should add an editor's note to the story.

Fairness to colleagues

Our colleagues in the journalism industry and at WBUR are also stakeholders in our work. Our actions reflect not just on ourselves, but also on our profession and on others in our organization. We strive to be fair to those we work alongside.

This is true on social media. Sharing our colleagues' work is encouraged. But when it comes to criticism of the work done by WBUR journalists, we treat our colleagues as we hope they would treat us. If we have something critical to say, we say it to them directly with respect and generosity. Social media is not the place for criticism of our colleagues.

We also treat each other with respect when using communication platforms such as Slack. When in doubt, it's always wise to ask a few questions: Would I say that directly to this person? Would I say that in front of my co-workers? How would I feel if that was said – in public — to me or about me?

Guideline: Attribute generously, and respect fair use.

Always be fair to your colleagues in the news media when drawing from their reports. Just as we insist that WBUR be given credit for its work, we are generous in giving credit to others for their original reporting and enterprise work.

When excerpting or quoting from other organizations' work, we strive to call attention to it, not draw attention from it. Do not quote or paraphrase another organization's material so much that you effectively make reading, watching or listening to their reports unnecessary. In its most egregious incarnations, excessive quotation can be construed as a form of plagiarism.

Guideline: Respect the WBUR copyright.

WBUR owns the material that we collect and produce in the course of our work, whether it's for use on-air or online. This material may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of WBUR. Consult with the executive editor for digital, programming director, and your department leader for requests to use WBUR's published work.

Honesty

We must be honest and truthful in the course of our work. It is a cornerstone of the trust between journalists and the public. We identify ourselves as WBUR journalists when we report. We attribute information, making clear to our audience what information comes from which source. We do not pay for interviews. We avoid hyperbole and sensational conjecture. We edit and present information honestly, without deception. Only in very rare instances – such as when public safety is at issue, when lives are at stake, or when our safety is of great concern – might we withhold or disguise our identity or intent when reporting. Before we take such a step, we engage in rigorous deliberation, consider all alternatives and have approval from senior news leaders. Then, when we tell the story, we fully disclose what we did and why.

Honesty in reporting and interviewing

When we are working, we identify ourselves as WBUR journalists to those whom we interview and interact. We do not misrepresent or conceal our identities, pose as someone or something we are not, use hidden microphones or cameras to collect information, or record phone calls without the permission of all parties on the line, except in the very rarest of circumstances. We can justify the use of deception only in very rare situations where the information we seek is profoundly important and when it is impossible to gain that information through full disclosure of our journalistic identity and intent. In such cases we must conduct a rigorous deliberation with the executive editors for news, and/or the executive producers for the national programs and podcasts, and the chief content officer, as well as with WBUR attorneys.

Guideline: When might it be appropriate to use deception or misrepresentation in news gathering?

- When the information obtained is of profound importance. It must be of vital public interest, such as revealing great “system failure” at the top levels, or it must prevent profound harm to individuals.
- When all other alternatives for obtaining the same information have been exhausted.
- When we have conducted a thorough, collaborative, and deliberative decision-making process on the ethical and legal issues, including consent laws in different states.
- When we are willing to disclose the nature of the deception and the reason for it.
- When we are able to commit the resources and time to pursue the story fully. Our work must be bulletproof.

- When the harm prevented by the information revealed through deception outweighs any harm caused by the act of deception.

Criteria that do not justify deception:

- Winning a prize.
- Beating the competition.
- Getting the story in less time and with less expense.
- Doing it because “others already did it.”
- The subjects of the story are themselves unethical.

Honesty in presenting information

Guideline: Our audience should always know which information comes from what source.

Plagiarism – taking someone else's work and intentionally presenting it as if it is your own – is wrong. It's an unforgivable offense. But it's not enough that we don't intend to deceive our audience. Our standard is to make clear to our audience where the information we publish and broadcast comes from.

That means no material from another source should ever be included verbatim, or substantially so, without attribution. Our writing should be our own. There is no excuse for writing that lifts from other news organizations without attribution.

It also means that whenever we present someone's words verbatim in text, we encase them within quotes or, in an audio report, make it clear that we are using the source's wording. If we paraphrase for space or clarity, we transparently credit the source of the ideas. And we don't lightly edit quotes just to avoid putting them in quotes; we use brackets, ellipses and other signals to make clear we've changed what someone said.

Guideline: We do not fabricate.

"Public radio reporters and producers," Sound Reporting advises, "do not 'manufacture' scenes for news programs. If you arrive at an office 15 minutes after the employees finish holding a prayer vigil for their kidnapped boss, you cannot ask them to reconvene so you can record a simulation of the event. By the same token, you shouldn't ask people to pretend they are answering the phone, or typing a letter, or fixing breakfast, so that you can get sound of those activities."

Our audience should never be confused or deceived about what is happening in our stories. For instance, if a dog barks in a story, it should be the real dog, not a sound effect. (And get the dog's name.)

Guideline: Our visual journalism must honestly depict reality.

When reporting on news events, the photographs and video we take and use depict events truthfully, honestly and without bias. Images are only enhanced for technical clarity — to correct color or improve contrast, for example. We are careful in how we crop photos and edit video to ensure that the scene is in proper context. We let events happen — we do not stage scenes to make them fit a storyline. If we have to rely on "file" art from the past, we clearly state so and include the date. And when considering photos provided by other organizations (e.g. The Associated Press), we view them with a critical eye to gauge whether they meet our standards.

When stories call for studio photography, it will be obvious to the viewer and if necessary it will be made perfectly clear in the accompanying caption information.

Likewise, when we choose for artistic or other reasons to employ illustrations or composites that include photos we clearly label the visuals as "photo illustration" or "composite." We take great care when we translate data into charts and visualizations. For example, while always striving to be accurate, we also guard against false precision. And we carefully consider the scales applied to the information we use and the context in which it's presented.

Honesty online

Just as we do in the "real" world, we identify ourselves as WBUR journalists when we are working online. So, if as part of our work we are posting comments, asking questions, tweeting, retweeting, blogging, using Facebook or doing anything on social media or other online forums, we clearly identify ourselves and that we work for WBUR. We do not use pseudonyms when doing such work.

WBUR journalists may, in the course of their work, "follow" or "friend" Twitter accounts, Facebook pages and other social media sites created by political parties and advocacy groups. But we do so to monitor their news feeds, not to become participants, and we follow and friend sites created by advocates from all sides of the issues. It's as basic a tool as it once was to sign up to be on mailing lists.

Just as we need not declare our presence to every individual at a public event, there are public online forums and platforms that we monitor in our news gathering and reporting process where it may not be required or even appropriate to announce ourselves. If there is any question about whether we should be announcing our presence as a journalist, and most certainly if there are safety concerns (for example, if we are monitoring chat platforms used by hate groups) consult with your editor to discuss precautions and procedures.

If in their personal lives WBUR journalists join private online forums, they may follow the conventions of those outlets. But we do not use information gathered from our interactions on such sites in our reports for WBUR. If we get ideas for stories, we treat the information just as we would anything we see in the "real world" — as a starting point that needs to be followed by open, honest reporting.

Finally, we acknowledge that nothing on the internet is truly private. Even if what we're doing is personal and not identified as coming from someone at WBUR, we understand that what we say and do could still reflect on WBUR. So we do nothing that could undermine our credibility with the public, damage WBUR's standing as an independent source of news, or otherwise jeopardize WBUR's reputation. In other words, we don't behave any differently than we would in any public setting or on a WBUR broadcast.

Guideline: Online sources should be on-the-record too.

In today's world, many contacts with sources are made online — via emails and social media sites. As we discuss in the guidelines about accuracy and transparency, WBUR strives to keep its interviews on-the-record. The same is true of our "virtual" interactions with sources. We make that clear to potential sources when we reach out to them.

Respect

Our obligation is to report the news good and bad. And everyone affected by our journalism deserves to be treated with decency and compassion. We are civil in our actions and words, avoiding arrogance and hubris. We listen to others. When we ask tough questions, we do so to seek answers — not confrontations. We respect and strive to include cultures different from our own and seek to represent them authentically in our work. We are mindful of how our own experiences affect our perception. We minimize harm and take special care with those who are vulnerable or suffering. And with all subjects of our coverage, particularly for those who do not hold public roles, we are mindful of their privacy as we fulfill our journalistic obligations.

Respect for sources and subjects of coverage and for our audience

The public is the most important stakeholder in our work, but everyone we cover is also an important stakeholder. We practice ethical journalism by doing our best to minimize harm as we report information in the public interest.

We pursue the truth with decency rather than ruthlessness, and humanity rather than indifference. In our reporting and interviewing, we favor clarity over sensationalism.

Our duty is to hold the powerful accountable, thus we don't take "no" for an answer when public officials avoid answering our questions. But even in our doggedness, we are polite and do not respond in kind to those who are less than courteous to us.

Guideline: Take special caution with those who are less media-savvy.

We make sure our guests and interview subjects know the general topics we want to talk with them about. We are especially sensitive with those who are inexperienced interviewees. While a mayor or university president, for example, can be expected to be comfortable in front of microphones and cameras, and to be "ready to go" relatively quickly, a parent or a small-business owner deserves some extra time before the tape starts rolling.

Guideline: Be considerate of community norms.

Realize that different communities and constituencies – online and offline – have their own culture, etiquette, and norms, and be respectful and inclusive of them. Our ethics don't change in different circumstances, but our decisions might.

The foundation of respect in reporting on any community is awareness. Strive to be knowledgeable about the culture and actively work to understand your own blind spots. Consult with your colleagues and resources in the community before you venture into unfamiliar settings.

Consider as well how your conduct in a community will affect your reporting. As you adjust behaviors such as language and dress in different situations, think about what might be most helpful or harmful to effective reporting.

Also, appreciate that journalism can be an intrusive act, and conduct yourself as a decent guest of the community where you're reporting. For instance, if the customary etiquette is to remove your shoes upon entering a building, it's appropriate to oblige.

Guideline: Show respect in sensitive circumstances.

WBUR journalists are sensitive when seeking or using interviews of those affected by tragedy or grief. That's especially true when dealing with children, anyone not familiar with being interviewed, and individuals who have difficulty understanding us because of language or comprehension differences. We are also careful with those who might be putting themselves in danger by speaking to us. If interviewing a witness to a crime, we must weigh carefully whether we are exposing the source to risk by identifying the person by name as a witness.

Guideline: Take special care with minors.

In addition to being ethically sensitive, be sure to consider legal issues when dealing with minors (generally defined as anyone under the age of 18). An interview or photograph of a minor about a sensitive subject require us to secure permission from at least one of the minor's parents (preferably both) or a legal guardian. Examples of sensitive subjects include cheating, sexual activity, involvement in gangs or crime, difficult family relationships, probation violation, pregnancy or parenthood, sexual abuse, mental and physical health and similar topics that could have legal ramifications or lead to embarrassment. Special care should be given to identifying minors in these scenarios, considering their thoughts may change with age.

An interview or photograph of a minor in a special custodial situation, such as foster care, juvenile detention, or holding facilities for undocumented immigrants, requires the consent of the person who has custody of the minor.

In cases where there is even a hint of doubt about whether to get consent or from whom, consult with your editor.

Guideline: Take special care when reporting about distressing situations.

We are extra careful in our coverage where people may have witnessed horrific scenes. While we can't undo the harm caused by trauma, we can minimize any further harm we might create by our intrusion. We must be professional, thoughtful and compassionate even as we pursue and report the truth. Situations like school shootings, racial violence and other acts of brutality require special care when interviewing witnesses and/or relatives. If interviewing substantially increases the distress of a witness, carefully balance the importance and quality of the information being obtained with the interviewee's emotional state and decide whether to pause or end the interview. In addition, discuss with your editor whether the information provided

advances the public's understanding, particularly if the airing of an interview may cause additional distress or harm.

Guideline: We don't name individuals who have allegedly suffered sexual assaults with rare exceptions.

WBUR does not name victims of sexual assaults. There are exceptions at times – such as when an individual wishes to go public – and WBUR senior news leadership will judge these instances on a case-by-case basis.

Guideline: We do not blindly air or post propaganda.

During times of civil unrest or criminal activity, groups or individuals may produce content to spread their messages. We must have a strong journalistic purpose to use such content, and when doing so we must be careful and transparent with our audience about the source of the content and our purpose for using it.

Guideline: Take great care in using potentially offensive language or video.

We avoid hard and fast rules while turning to policy as a guide for our decision making. The NPR policy offers us guidance: "...there are rare instances where we will permit use of profane or indecent languages for news or programmatic reasons. Such an instance is when the use of such language is so vital to the essence of the story that to excise or bleep it would be to distort it or blunt its power and meaning." The NPR policy states: "As a responsible broadcaster, NPR has always set a high bar on use of language that may be offensive to our audience. Use of such language on the air has been strictly limited to situations where it is absolutely integral to the meaning and spirit of the story being told."

This holds true for other offensive language, such as racist and ethnic slurs. The NPR policy further states that in some cases "the use of profanity ... is editorially justifiable" because it meets the test of being "vital to the essence of the story" and cutting it out or bleeping the word would alter the power and meaning of the report.

Ideally, before the offensive language or the profanity is aired, consider preceding it with a language advisory from the host or the reporter. Similar advisory considerations should be given to digital and visual storytelling

Guideline: Discussions about whether to use such material must happen well before broadcast or posting.

If potentially offensive language is being considered for broadcast, senior news managers must be consulted with enough lead time to allow for a substantive discussion. If time for discussion is running short, the language must be cut from the report or "bleeped."

Videos and audio clips of someone being shot, a disaster victim crying for help, bodies being recovered and other potentially disturbing scenes present us with challenges. Cellphone video

and police body cameras have made these decisions more frequent. They can provide important evidence, but we should be mindful of the impact they might have on our audience.

When weighing whether to post such videos online and to use any clips on the air, keep in mind that conversations are required. Depending on the nature of the content, consult with the executive editors for news and digital, and/or the executive producers for national shows and podcasts.

Live broadcasts and rolling coverage present particular challenges, and sometimes we may not be able to control the source material. Some programs, such as Radio Boston and On Point, are able to use delay technology to avoid unintended profanity and other objectionable language. That is not always possible for all live coverage, and we should always remain sensitive to the experience of our listeners.

Guideline: Report the facts in tragedies, but don't be callous.

While our journalistic duty is to tell what happened, we must be thoughtful and sensitive. Audio may convey graphic detail and photos or video may show someone's death or grievous injury. Out of respect for that person and that person's family, we consider carefully what should be shown or heard. Our general rule is that we do not post video or use audio of someone's moment of death or serious harm. There will be exceptions, but only after discussion and approval from senior news leadership.

We also respect our audience. They want the facts. But for many, reading or hearing descriptions will be more than enough. Seeing or hearing disturbing events could leave them too shaken to follow the rest of a story.

"Every other news outlet is using it" is not on its own a justification for posting or broadcasting anything.

Guideline: Verify the authenticity of the content.

Proceed with caution in using external audio, photos or video, particularly in breaking news events. Especially in the first minutes and hours after such content surfaces, its credibility may be in doubt.

Guideline: Consider alternative approaches when reporting and publishing graphic details and content.

If it's decided that videos or photographs with potentially disturbing content are newsworthy, our audience should be forewarned. They should include a warning label, and shouldn't post anywhere that would autoplay if it is out of our control.

Likewise, on the air, listeners should never hear potentially disturbing content without first being told that it's coming. For instance, audio of gunshots should not be heard until after a caution has been provided.

We should consider whether a video's disturbing moments and sounds can and should be blurred or bleeped, for posting online and using on the air.

If we decide to link to another outlet that has obtained and posted disturbing content, we should caution readers as well. The language should be simple and clear. For example: "The Daily Planet has [posted a clip from the video here](#). Warning: It is graphic and could be disturbing to some viewers."

Independence and Interdependence

WBUR's primary commitment is to the public. We serve that public interest with accurate, fair and honest reporting. Decisions about what we cover, how we do our work and what we report are made by our journalists. We are not influenced by those who provide WBUR with financial support. Boston University owns WBUR's FCC license, but we maintains editorial independence of our content. We are not deterred by those who might attempt to undermine our independence. We are not swayed in our journalistic mission by those in power or those who attempt to manipulate our journalism. We do not let any of our personal interests conflict with our allegiance to the public.

Our independence does not stand alone. To fulfill our journalistic mission we must also be interdependent with the communities we serve. This means we must be informed, inclusive and grounded in the issues and communities we cover. Our journalists must proactively engage with the people, constituencies and organizations to reflect the entirety of our region. We must observe, listen and learn. Our credibility relies on the trust we build with those we serve. Critical to that trust is that our audience must see themselves – their lives and the issues that matter to them – reflected in our coverage.

WBUR journalists are also members of the public

WBUR journalists bring both our professional commitment and our personal selves to our work. Our life experiences and perspectives are valuable assets that inform our role as journalists. We enjoy the right to robust personal lives that enrich us and connect us and help us better understand our communities. Yet, like many other professions, we accept certain unique obligations and limitations designed to protect our credibility and the integrity of WBUR's journalism.

Like all people, we have personal beliefs and opinions. But the public deserves factual reporting and informed, unprejudiced analysis. So we strive to make decisions and report stories that transcend our biases and treat all views fairly. We aggressively challenge our own perspectives and pursue a comprehensive representation of views from a diverse range of other individuals, aiming always to present the truth as completely as we can convey it.

Any personal interests that conflict with our allegiance to the public, whether in appearance or in reality, risk compromising our credibility. We are vigilant in disclosing to both our supervisors at WBUR, and as warranted the public, any circumstances where our loyalties may be divided, and if necessary, we recuse ourselves from related coverage. Under no circumstances do we skew our reports for personal gain.

Guideline: Impartiality as citizens and in our personal lives.

Alongside our roles as journalists, we are also members of the public ourselves, with a stake in the future of our society and opinions about the direction it should take.

We may exercise our right to vote when we make our decisions privately in our role as citizens.

WBUR journalists who cover politics or government, or who oversee such coverage, should consider whether it is appropriate to affiliate with a particular party (NB: in Massachusetts you do not need to register with a party to vote in a primary election), and other journalists should consider the pros and cons of party registration. If you find yourself having to publicly state your political preferences or affiliation as part of the voting process, talk with your supervisor about the issues this raises and how best to resolve them.

Privately expressing our political choices at the ballot box doesn't negate our commitment to keeping our opinions to ourselves. Public expressions of our beliefs – such as taking a position on a public policy issue – can be problematic and can test our impartiality and potentially erode our credibility.

Guideline: We are journalists not advocates for political candidates nor activists for causes.

Our role as journalists is to fairly and skillfully cover the issues and events in our communities. We're not advocates. We do not run for office nor endorse candidates or ballot issues. WBUR journalists may not contribute to political campaigns or referendums, as doing so would call into question WBUR's journalistic independence and our impartiality.

Impartiality also means we should not sign petitions or otherwise contribute support or money to political causes or public campaigns. Also, we don't put political signs in our yards or bumper stickers on our cars, and if family members get involved in politics we recuse ourselves from any coverage that touches on their activities and we do our best to maintain our independence from their pursuits.

There are issues that are foundational to WBUR that align with our public service mission: the freedom of the press, the public's right to know the actions government takes on its behalf, the crusade against misinformation, and our shared humanity, including the dignity of all human beings.

WBUR journalists may feel our unique personal experience or perspective would substantially advance the public's understanding such that we are considering taking a position on a particular issue of public debate in the form of an opinion piece — whether for WBUR or another outlet — or some form of personal activism. In these situations, we should discuss the matter and get approval from senior editorial leadership.

Here are questions we would consider:

- *Would the journalist's participation affect their professional credibility as a journalist?*
- *How would their participation affect WBUR's credibility and the independence of our journalism?*
- *What would it mean for WBUR to have one of its journalists participating on one side of a partisan issue?*

Guideline: Journalists should be cautious and seek consultation when it comes to marches, rallies and similar events.

Journalists are human beings with their own unique life experiences, values, beliefs, identities and vulnerabilities. Our greatest tool, and the mission that unites us, is our journalism.

That is to say, we manifest our values through our journalism. As a public media organization, our independence is a core value. We must consider that independence when we participate in mass action or other forms of public activism. There will be tension between the professional and the personal. Guidelines provide direction but they are not rigid rules.

There is real journalistic value in being an observer at public events such as a march or rally, even without a reporting assignment. Yet there inevitably will be cases when individuals want to participate in public events beyond being just observers. These cases need discussion and deserve serious consideration.

For instance, we may feel compelled to attend a public vigil or collective mourning, and should be free to do so in many cases. We should consider the location and circumstances to ensure we are not becoming public participants in a partisan cause. WBUR regularly reports on these events and causes, and we need to preserve our unique role as independent journalists.

In some instances, it may be appropriate for a WBUR journalist to participate in a public event, with the awareness of some limitations on their actions. For instance, merely marching in a parade to show solidarity or support for a core human right is reasonably safe territory, as long as the journalist is not covering the event. In other cases, it would be inappropriate for a WBUR journalist to be involved when the participation of politicians in public events or advocacy for specific legislation risk damaging WBUR's independence. This is particularly challenging terrain for local journalists, due to the greater overlap between our personal involvement in our community and our public responsibility as independent journalists.

Since the nature of each event differs, journalists should first discuss these matters in advance with the head of their editorial department (i.e. executive editor or executive producer) to figure out ethical pressure points and why they may exist or emerge. If further consultation is needed, the issue should go to the WBUR Ethics Committee and in some cases the chief content officer or chief executive officer.

It's up to individual journalists to be judicious in deciding when and why they might feel it imperative to publicly participate as an expression of their personal values and to raise the issue in advance. WBUR leadership vows to respect those requests and to thoughtfully reach a fair and justifiable decision.

Guideline: We don't serve on government boards and commissions.

WBUR journalists may not serve on government boards or commissions. Generally, we avoid serving on any boards of directors, and we don't hold offices with non-profit organizations that would create conflicts of interest between our work for WBUR and our responsibilities to the other institution. We may make an exception to allow journalists to serve on the boards of institutions where such conflicts are unlikely, such as other journalism organizations or journalism-related educational institutions. All such exceptions require approval from supervisors. And of course, if a WBUR journalist serves on the board of an institution that becomes the subject of WBUR's reporting, that journalist should be recused from any related coverage.

Guideline: Don't act any differently online than you would in any other public setting.

Social media outlets are public spaces. The line between private and public activity has been blurred by these digital platforms, and we should assume everything we do on social media is public. And regardless of how careful we try to keep them separate, our professional and our personal lives overlap when we're online.

In reality, anything you post online is findable and reflects both on you and on WBUR. Tweets, Facebook group messages, Instagram posts and other social media communications — even if they're intended to be personal messages to friends or family — can be easily circulated beyond the intended audiences. The content, therefore, represents us personally and WBUR to the outside world — as do our radio pieces and digital stories. As in all of our reporting, the WBUR Guiding Principles help us to navigate our use of social media.

We should conduct ourselves on social media with an eye to how our behavior might appear if we were called upon to defend them as being appropriate for a journalist. Of course, what is deemed “appropriate” is often subjective, and reasonable, well-intentioned people will disagree. That's why these guidelines are meant truly as just that: guidelines.

As a general rule, we do not advocate for political or other causes online or in the digital space. We don't endorse candidates, referenda, or political advocacy campaigns. This extends to other areas of active public debate that WBUR covers or may cover. We hold power and responsibility in our role as journalists, and we should be cautious about how we wield our tools of communication and information.

These guidelines are not intended to restrict our ability to share and discuss issues we find important. In fact, social media has enabled us to be more transparent with our audience. It is a valuable tool for building trust and providing context for our reporting.

But we need to be mindful that what we share could impact WBUR's capacity to independently cover issues of public debate. We want to participate in the public discourse on the biggest issues of our time, but our role is not to advocate or display partisanship. A guiding principle is that we show our work. We explain how our reporting and experience leads to our

understanding. We use evidence and storytelling to provide context and fact-based reasoning in order to shed light on complex issues.

Guideline: We accept criticism, not abuse or threats.

Journalists are just like those in other professions. We enjoy being praised when we do good work. But unlike those in occupations that aren't in the public eye, journalists have to accept that being criticized is part of the job. We have to be willing to put up with some pushback from the public.

We do not, however, tolerate abuse. We do not have to put up with being personally attacked because of our gender, race, sexuality, religion or any other identifying factor. Increasingly, journalists are becoming targets of organized abuse campaigns by bad faith actors to discredit, harass and otherwise harm us. It is an ethical obligation of WBUR to do all that it can to protect our journalists when they come under attack. WBUR journalists should know first that they are not alone in these moments.

If a message is threatening or you feel you are being targeted for abuse, contact the executive editors for news and digital and the director of engineering, infrastructure, operations and IT. They will take appropriate actions and keep you updated. In some cases that action may be to document the threat and provide support. In others, WBUR may involve law enforcement and take safety precautions including digital or physical protection.

Social media is an effective means to spread our journalism and hear from the public. But it's become increasingly clear that social media communities can give rise to toxicity and harm. WBUR journalists should know that there is support available to them when they come under attack.

Guideline: Recognize and avoid conflicts of interest.

It's not always easy to detect when we have a personal or professional stake that might conflict — or even appear to conflict — with our journalistic duty. Conflicts of interest come in many shapes — financial holdings, romantic relationships, family ties, book deals, speaking engagements, and other situations. It's important to regularly review how our connections are entangled with the subjects of our reporting, and when necessary, to take action.

In minor cases, we might satisfy an apparent conflict by prominently disclosing it, and perhaps explaining to the public why it doesn't compromise our work. When presented with more significant conflicts, our best response is to avoid them. Certain conflicts are unavoidable, and may require us to recuse ourselves from certain coverage. More specific guidance on how to make these decisions appears in the sections below.

Guideline: Know when to disclose, and when to recuse.

All WBUR journalists must tell supervisors in advance about potential conflicts of interest. When first assigned to cover or work on a matter, disclose to your immediate supervisors any

business, commercial, financial or personal interests where such interests might reasonably be construed as being in actual, apparent or potential conflict with our duties. This includes situations in which a spouse, family member or companion is an active participant in a subject area that you cover. In the financial category, this does not include an investment by you or your spouse, family member or companion in mutual funds or pension funds that are invested by fund managers in a broad range of companies (unless, of course, the assignment concerns those specific funds).

When a spouse, family member, partner or companion is involved in political activity, be sensitive that this could create real or perceived conflicts of interest. In such instances, advise your supervisor so that it can be determined whether you should recuse yourself from a certain story or area of coverage.

Guideline: Consult with supervisors on outside work.

WBUR offers its journalists the chance to reach huge audiences across all of our platforms. We agree to not compete with WBUR and to make it the primary outlet for the journalism created by WBUR staff.

WBUR journalists are able to take advantage of other opportunities so long as they do not interfere or conflict with the work we do for WBUR. WBUR journalists sometimes write books, magazine pieces and newspaper articles, appear on panels and give speeches and presentations. Our expertise is extremely valuable. Universities may ask us to teach and lecture. These are opportunities that can provide benefits and offer us the chance to stretch, to reflect on our work and to broaden the reach of our journalism.

But outside work can also present challenges. It requires working with organizations that might have different goals and standards than WBUR. It can sometimes present entanglements that conflict with our journalistic independence.

We must be selective about these opportunities and vigilant about the challenges they pose. WBUR journalists are expected to abide by our ethical standards while doing outside work. Supervisors should be consulted (and return a quick answer) on freelance journalistic work.

WBUR CitySpace and Public Events

How WBUR Journalists Respond to Requests for Public Appearances

There is great value in WBUR journalists engaging with the public beyond our news programming. We can contribute our journalistic expertise and we also have the opportunity to connect with and learn from members of the communities that we serve. WBUR's CitySpace offers us a unique opportunity for such connections. Other WBUR produced events can offer

similar value. And some non-WBUR community events can provide meaningful engagement with the public.

That said, we consider each request on its own merit and recognize that our journalists always represent WBUR in any public forum or event. Our journalistic integrity and the reputation of WBUR are always paramount.

Requests for WBUR journalists to speak at events from outside organizations such as academic, non-profit and professional organizations as well as businesses or other organizations should be vetted to ensure these appearances adhere to WBUR standards. Even other news organization requests should be carefully considered based on the standards and reputation of the news organization and expectations of that organization related to the specific invitation. To manage these requests, we collaborate with our WBUR colleagues in marketing and communications.

Journalists may accept honorariums, paid travel and meals for speaking engagements and awards ceremonies from educational or nonprofit groups not engaged in significant lobbying, political activity or advocacy. Journalists should consult their supervisor before accepting payments for an engagement.

It's essential that the journalist's role in the event focuses on journalistic expertise. Our role is not to engage in direct fundraising for organizations other than WBUR. In all cases, it's important for the supervisors to discuss the request with the WBUR journalist who would be participating in the event. Supervisors will strive for a prompt decision, and will provide an explanation if the invitation to participate must be declined.

Interaction with those who support our work.

CitySpace and live events are valuable platforms for our journalism and engagement with the public. They can also offer opportunities to financially support our work. There might be multiple WBUR departments involved in such events that involve sponsors or funders, and it's essential that everyone agrees to protect the independence of WBUR's journalism

This includes any public presentation involving WBUR journalists as well as interactions with event sponsors and/or station funders. While there is benefit in tapping into the expertise of our journalists and there is value for the station to showcase our talent and foster relationships with our audiences and our supporters, it is also imperative to protect the independence and editorial integrity of our journalism.

When WBUR journalists host or moderate events, they maintain complete editorial control over the questioning and direction of the conversation. Guests and panelists are selected for their expertise, whether that is through personal or professional experience, and to reflect a diversity

of thought and communities. Journalists leading conversations should play a leading role in shaping the composition of panels and hold final veto power.

The best protocol for these situations is for the WBUR staff member organizing a potential event to discuss the request for a journalist's participation with their supervisor and the senior news manager, for example the executive editor for news or the executive producer in the case of WBUR's nationally distributed programs and podcasts, and the chief content officer.

If an opportunity presents a new, complex or difficult ethical question, or if a supervisor and a journalist disagree about an event's merit, including ethical concerns, it should be discussed with the chief content officer, the executive editor for news, and relevant stakeholders. Journalists will not be obligated to participate in any event if they do not feel comfortable.

There are situations when a WBUR CitySpace event are of such news value that they are covered by WBUR journalists. When that happens, we should be transparent about WBUR's involvement in the origin of the event.

Guideline: Make sure WBUR's audience can clearly distinguish between editorial and non-editorial content.

Donors, corporations, local businesses, philanthropists and others support our journalism, and it is the integrity and independence of our journalism that provides part of the value that sponsors seek in associating their brands with WBUR. Therefore, it is in everyone's interest that sponsorship, in whatever form it takes, be clearly labeled or otherwise demarcated for our audience in the platform where it appears.

This includes native advertising or "sponsored" or "branded" content. The commercial aspects of non-editorial content should be easily transparent to the audience; in other words, we should not deceive our audience about the nature and motivations of the content. In addition, the interview subjects of any WBUR-created non-editorial work, such as branded content, should be aware that the content is independent from our editorial work. These are non-editorial projects, and editorial staff should not be involved in their creation.

Advertisers and business partners have no influence over our journalism. Senior news managers and business team staff often communicate in order to identify opportunities to support our work and to fund editorial initiatives. However sponsors and other funders do not have any special access to our journalism. When advertisers become part of our coverage, they are treated just like any other subject in our journalism.

Interacting with funders

Our journalism is made possible by a diverse coalition of funding sources, including donations from members of the public, grants from foundations, public funding, and sponsorships. While we value all who support our work, those who fund us do so in the knowledge that our journalism serves only the public. We believe our strength as a business is premised solely on

high-quality, independent journalism in the public interest. All WBUR employees – journalists as well as business, marketing and communications, and development staff – are committed first and foremost to that service.

At WBUR, senior news leadership has full and final authority over all of our journalism. We work with all other divisions of the organization toward the goal of supporting and protecting our journalism. This means we communicate with our business partnership and development colleagues to identify areas where we hope to expand our reporting.

WBUR journalists take part in promotional activities to support our editorial mission, including fundraising events, on-air fund drives and public radio audience-building initiatives. We observe a clear boundary line: WBUR journalists interact with funders only to further our editorial goals, not to serve the agendas of those who support us.

Guideline: Stick with storytelling. Steer clear of selling.

There's no one better than a WBUR journalist to describe the value, impact and character of our journalism. So we may be called upon to talk about our work with those who might support it, whether over the air during a pledge drive or in person during a meeting with prospective funders. But in all our interactions with potential funders, we observe this boundary: We're there to tell our story, not to discuss the agendas of our supporters. This means we may describe the goals and ambitions of our editorial work, promote the value of that work and the worthiness of supporting it, or recount what we've experienced in our reporting.

Understand that donors may express opinions about the subjects we cover. Our role is not to agree or disagree, but to share our journalism.

No WBUR journalist should feel compelled to participate in meetings with prospective donors, sponsors or foundations. Again, our business partnership and development colleagues support our service to the public, not vice versa. Part of the job of these departments is making our funders aware that we will be editorially blind to their support – that we'll conduct our journalism with no favor or slight to them or their interests. Our colleagues also vet potential supporters to make sure their interests don't present an actual or apparent conflict with our mission.

WBUR is a highly collaborative modern public media organization. Ideally, journalists at WBUR devote most of their work and efforts to journalism assignments. On occasion, journalists are called on to work on projects that involve or are initiated by other departments. We should consider these on a project by project basis, consulting with editorial leadership. We would consider what are the implications for the journalist's primary work, and whether projects for other departments would present editorial conflicts of interest.

Journalists often speak of a "firewall" that separates the journalism from the funders. Properly understood, the firewall is a useful metaphor. In engineering, a firewall isn't an impassable boundary, but rather a barrier designed to contain the spread of a dangerous or corrupting force. Similarly, the purpose of our firewall is to hold in check the influence our funders have over our journalism and independence.