

**Editorial Code of Conduct** (Covers Ethics Policy, Diversity Policy, Correction Policy and Practice, Unnamed Sources/Confidential Documents Policy, Verification/Fact-checking Standards):

As a company, we hold the following values:

- **We're open to learning.** The news industry is constantly evolving. Our guidelines may shift to reflect the rest of the market. We anticipate that these guidelines will be revisited and updated from time to time internally. But we will always be open to suggestions, criticism, and corrections from our audience.
- **We're clear and transparent.** When you have a question about editorial standards or need to discern if there is an exception, speak with your superiors.
- **We hold ourselves, our peers, our industry, and our story subjects accountable.**
- **We want to maintain trust with our audience.** That means that maintaining quality and consistency throughout our work helps us maintain and grow our audience around the world.
- **We're decent and fair.** Our work's goal is not intended to hurt, but to inform our audience, and facilitate the national discussion around news.
- **We maintain excellence in everything we do.** We expect the highest standards at all levels of the editorial process, and we aim to improve every day.
- **We inform, inspire, impact, and innovate.** Through our work, we aim to spark national conversation and share it with others.

## Diversity

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IJR is an equal opportunity employer and is committed to a policy of equal employment opportunity. Our Company does not discriminate nor permit discrimination against employees or applicants for employment on any basis including, but not limited to race, age, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital or familial status, national origin, disability, genetic information, veteran status or any other characteristic protected by law. All employees are responsible for complying with all applicable federal, state and local laws, rules, and regulations regarding nondiscrimination practices.

IJR complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act, as amended by the ADA Amendments Act, and all applicable state and local laws and is committed to providing equal employment opportunities to qualified individuals with disabilities. Consistent with this commitment, the Company will provide a reasonable accommodation to disabled applicants and employees if the reasonable accommodation would allow the individual to perform the essential functions of the job, unless doing so would create

an undue hardship. Employees who believe they need an accommodation because of a disability should contact Human Resources to request an accommodation.

## Sources

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### When to Reach Out

When writing about private figures, always reach out. When writing about public figures regarding what they've said or done on the record or in interviews, it's not always necessary. However, when writing about new news about a public figure or even when in doubt, try to get comment. If newsworthy information or media is available on a public figure, it can be shared on our site without necessarily having to reach out to the newsmaker.

If a private figure publicly shares newsworthy social media you should make an attempt to reach out to confirm the truth of the story, and to improve your story with an original quote. The exception to the rule of reaching out is using social media for commentary and color. Use special caution and best judgment in cases that involve nudity, children, health, violence, or otherwise sensitive information.

### Press Releases, Statements, and Exclusives

If you extract quotes from a press release or statement, explicitly note that “*Mr. Doe said in a press release*” in your copy. Also, feel free to explicitly note if a statement released to us or an interview is an exclusive.

### Attribution

Give credit where it's due. If you're reporting information obtained first by another news outlet, don't just explicitly note that your story it's coming from them, but *clearly* hyperlink to that story.

### Keeping Sources Anonymous

Typically, anonymous sources should not be quoted unless they face a genuine threat when their name is used in a story. Exceptions to this rule include sexual harassment victims and witnesses to crimes. When speaking to minors, obtain approval by their parents or guardians first. An unknown source who offers a story tip must be confirmed by two sources. Additionally, commentary from private figures (ex. “9 Moms Share Their Best Tricks to Get Babies to Sleep”) do not require full names. You can use their first name. Approval of a story with less than the required amount of sources to back an unknown tip requires the approval of the majority of the executive team. In all cases, check with your editor before quoting or sourcing an anonymous source. Editorial approval is required prior to publishing.

## **Reliable Sources and Fact-checking**

Stick to witnesses or the newsmakers themselves as the sources for your stories. Avoid second- and third-hand sources unless their claims can be confirmed by others. Writers and reporters are responsible for ensuring that their work is factual accurate. Additionally, each article and its sources are checked for accuracy by an editor before publication.

## **Plagiarism and Fabrication**

IJR does not tolerate plagiarism under any circumstances. We define plagiarism as the use of others' work without attribution, whether that is found in a published article or a draft submitted to editors for publishing. If a writer has been found to have used others' work without attribution, it may lead to a complete review of that author's work. IJR does not tolerate the fabrication of news under any circumstances. That means we don't tolerate lies in copy or throughout the story process (ex. lying about why you left the office, faking sources, misleading your editors).

## **Quotations**

Quotations must be accurate and match exactly what the person said. If editing a quote is necessary for clarity's sake, avoid editing in a way that deceives the reader and/or misrepresents the person quoted. Edits to original quotes should always be marked by brackets and/or ellipsis.

# **Updates and Corrections**

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## **Breaking News**

The writer is responsible for updating a breaking story until it reaches full development. Speak to an editor about when you should stop updating the story, and whether a secondary story is necessary.

## **Corrections**

Factual corrections to copy that has already been posted to IJR.com must include a correction at the bottom of the page. Typos that are fixed and reformatted by copy editors do not require correction notes at the end of the story. Egregious or frequent factual errors may lead to a complete review of that writer's work.

# **Legal and Ethics**

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## *Ethical Storytelling*

IJR adopts the Associated Press' definitions of these terms:

**On the record.** *The information can be used with no caveats, quoting the source by name.*

**Off the record.** *The information cannot be used for publication.*

**Background.** *The information can be published but only under conditions negotiated with the source. Generally, the sources do not want their names published but will agree to a description of their position. [IJR] reporters should object vigorously when a source wants to brief a group of reporters on background and try to persuade the source to put the briefing on the record. These background briefings have become routine in many venues, especially with government officials.*

**Deep background.** *The information can be used but without attribution. The source does not want to be identified in any way, even on condition of anonymity.*

*In general, information obtained under any of these circumstances can be pursued with other sources to be placed on the record. In these circumstances, consult your editor.*

When possible, try to speak on the record as much as possible, and only resort to being on background when the information is vital to the public and to your story.

Writers have a duty to uphold agreements of being on or off the record with their sources. If a source is essential but cannot be named, IJR will not be intimidated by public relations officials, politicians, or attorneys in order to give away their sources. Editors and executives may request to know sources in order to know how to best proceed.

### **Compensating Sources**

Under no circumstances will IJR editorial staff compensate a source/their representatives for an interview, documents, tips, or exclusive stories.

### **Favors and Trades**

Under no circumstances will IJR staff use favors, trades, or favorable coverage as a means to obtaining an interview, documents, tips, rewards, or exclusive stories.

### **Conflicts of Interest**

Writers, editors, and reporters should disclose to their editor or manager any information that they feel will be a conflicting interest. This may include who you've taken money from in the past 3-5 years, paid speeches or appearances, paid travel, advertising relationships, prior or current political organization affiliations, activism, investments, liabilities, other employers or sources of income.

### **Obeying the Law**

All writers are expected to obey the law when pursuing stories. If you're unsure if your newsgathering activities follow local, state, or federal law, consult with your editor prior to any of the said newsgathering activities for approval. Laws about recording without permission from all parties varies by state, but a story subject should always be aware that they are being recorded. If a special situation arises, seek editorial approval.

### **Personal Conduct**

Using a fake name, fake credentials, a fake title, or falsely identifying yourself in any professional capacity is strictly prohibited. Use your real name and formal title at IJR when working in a professional capacity. If you're working on an investigative story that requires you to veil certain aspects of your identity, it must explicitly be noted within the story and you must seek editorial approval prior to pursuing the story.

### **Sponsored Content**

Sponsored and native content will be clearly marked.