

# Code of Ethics

Society of Professional Journalists

## **PREAMBLE**

Members of the Society of Professional Journalists believe that public enlightenment is the forerunner of justice and the foundation of democracy. The duty of the journalist is to further those ends by seeking truth and providing a fair and comprehensive account of events and issues. Conscientious journalists from all media and specialties strive to serve the public with thoroughness and honesty. Professional integrity is the cornerstone of a journalist's credibility.

Members of the Society share a dedication to ethical behavior and adopt this code to declare the

- § Recognize a special obligation to ensure that the public's business is conducted in the open and that government records are open to inspection.

## **MINIMIZE HARM**

**Ethical journalists treat sources, subjects and colleagues as human beings deserving of respect. Journalists should:**

- § Show compassion for those who may be affected adversely by news coverage. Use special sensitivity when dealing with children and inexperienced sources or subjects.
- § Be sensitive when seeking or using interviews or photographs of those affected by tragedy or grief.
- § Recognize that gathering and reporting information may cause harm or discomfort. Pursuit of the news is not a license for arrogance.
- § Recognize that private people have a greater right to control information about themselves than do public officials and others who seek power, influence or attention. Only an overriding public need can justify intrusion into anyone's privacy.
- § Show good taste. Avoid pandering to lurid curiosity.
- § Be cautious about identifying juvenile suspects or victims of sex crimes.
- § Be judicious about naming criminal suspects before the formal filing of charges.
- § Balance a criminal suspect's fair trial rights with the public's right to be informed.

## **ACT INDEPENDENTLY**

**Journalists should be free of obligation to any interest other than the public's right to know. Journalists should:**

- § Avoid conflicts of interest, real or perceived.
- § Remain free of associations and activities that may compromise integrity or damage credibility.
- § Refuse gifts, favors, fees, free travel and sp