



**WUWM 89.7 FM – Milwaukee Public Radio**

111 E. Wisconsin Ave., Ste. 700, Milwaukee, WI 53202

414.227.3355 phone | 414.270.1297 fax | wuwm@uwm.edu

## **CODE OF ETHICS AND PRACTICES**

*WUWM's listeners depend on an honest portrayal of issues and events in all of the station's broadcasts. This code of ethics applies to WUWM 89.7 FM - Milwaukee Public Radio's journalists and is WUWM's pledge to maintain the highest standards of journalistic integrity.*

*National Public Radio originally adopted this document for its journalists. As a member station of NPR, this code was adapted for use at WUWM. Nothing in this document supersedes the policies of the University of Wisconsin System, or any local, state or federal law.*

### **I. Statement of Purpose**

#### **Credibility.**

As an organization, which produces journalism, we are always testing and questioning the credibility of others. We have to stand that test ourselves.

The purpose of having a code of ethics and practices is to protect the credibility of WUWM informational programming by ensuring high standards of honesty, integrity, impartiality and conduct of staff. We accomplish this by (a) articulating the ethical standards we observe in pursuing and presenting stories, (b) setting rules and policies that prevent conflicts of interest, (c) establishing guidelines for outside work and activities that may reflect on WUWM, and (d) establishing policies and procedures to ensure that the activities of WUWM that fall outside journalism – corporate underwriting, foundation funding, marketing and promotional activities – do not jeopardize our journalistic independence or involve WUWM reporters, editors, hosts or producers in activities inappropriate to their role as journalists.

### **II. Who and What is Covered**

This code covers all WUWM journalists, defined as employees who report (including hosts and newscasters), edit or produce news and public affairs programming. It also covers all senior News managers. The code applies to all platforms for all locally produced WUWM news and public affairs content.

The code also applies to material provided to WUWM by independent producers and freelance reporters. WUWM expects its outside contributors to be free of conflicts of interest on stories they cover, to be fair and accurate, and to pursue stories in a manner consistent with the ethical journalism principles stated in this code. There will be instances where provisions of this code are not applicable to an outside contributor (a freelancer who primarily does arts coverage, for example, may not in some situations be subject to the prohibition on making contributions to political campaigns). Supervisors will make these judgments on a case-by-case basis and, if necessary, in consultation with the General Manager. Because contributors in this category are not WUWM employees, the remedy for dealing with a conflict of interest or other violation of the principles of this code is rejection of the offered material as well as any future story proposals similarly affected by the conflict. As with WUWM journalists, outside contributors must disclose potential conflicts of interest when they accept an assignment or make a story pitch, and WUWM editors must make sufficient inquiries of those persons to satisfy themselves that the contributors have complied with this code.



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### III. Statement of Principles

Our coverage must be fair, unbiased, accurate, complete and honest. As WUWM journalists, we are expected to conduct ourselves in a manner that leaves no question about our independence and fairness. We must treat the people we cover and our listeners with respect.

1. **Fairness** means that we present all important views on a subject – and treat them even-handedly. This range of views may be encompassed in a single story on a controversial topic, or it may play out over a body of coverage or series of commentaries. But at all times the commitment to presenting all important views must be conscious and affirmative, and it must be timely if it is being accomplished over the course of more than one story.

2. **Unbiased** means that we separate our personal opinions – such as an individual's religious beliefs or political ideology – from the subjects we are covering. We do not approach any coverage with overt or hidden agendas.

3. **Accuracy** means that each day we make rigorous efforts at all levels of the newsgathering and programming process to ensure our facts are not only right but also presented in the correct context. We make every possible effort to ensure commentaries are correct in assertions of fact. We attempt to verify what our sources and the officials we interview tell us when the material involved is argumentative or capable of different interpretations. We are skeptical of all facts gathered and report them only when we are reasonably satisfied of their accuracy. We guard against errors of omission that cause a story to misinform our listeners by failing to be complete. We make sure that our language accurately describes the facts and does not imply a fact we have not confirmed.

4. **Honesty** means we do not deceive the people or institutions we cover about our identity or intentions, and we do not deceive our listeners. We do not deceive our listeners by presenting the work of others as our own (plagiarism), by cutting interviews in ways that distort their meaning, or by manipulating audio in a way that distorts its meaning, how it was obtained or when it was obtained. Honesty means owning up publicly and quickly to mistakes we make on air.

5. Treating the people we cover and our listeners with **respect** means we recognize the diversity of the country and world on which we report, and the diversity of interests, attitudes and experiences of our audience. We approach subjects in an open-minded, sensitive and civil way.

#### **IV. Conflicts of Interest**

1. Conducting ourselves in a manner that inspires confidence in us as independent and fair means avoiding actual and apparent conflicts of interest or engaging in outside activities, public comment or writing that calls into question our ability to report fairly on a subject.

2. A conflict of interest in its simplest dictionary term is a conflict between the private interests and the professional responsibilities of a person in a position of trust. An operative word in this sentence is "trust." All of us are in positions of trust when it comes to both our audience and the people and institutions that we cover. To maintain that trust requires that there be no real or perceived overlap between the private interests and opinions of WUWM journalists and their professional responsibilities.

3. An employee covered by this code has the responsibility to disclose potential conflicts of interest. Revealing a conflict of interest after an individual has already participated in coverage where such a conflict exists or appears to exist is can be extremely damaging to the reputation of WUWM. WUWM journalists must, at the time they are first assigned to cover or work on a matter, disclose to their immediate supervisor any business, commercial, financial or personal interests where such interests might reasonably be construed as being in actual, apparent or potential conflict with their duties. This would include situations in which a spouse, family member or companion is an active participant in a subject area that the WUWM journalist covers. In the financial category, this does not include a journalist's investment in mutual funds or pension funds that are invested by fund managers in a broad range of companies. The supervisor will decide whether the interests create an actual conflict of interest or the appearance of a conflict. In making these decisions, supervisors should feel free to consult with the General Manager.

#### **V. Outside Work, Freelancing, Speaking Engagements**

1. The primary responsibility of WUWM journalists is to gather, write, edit or produce news for WUWM and not work in direct competition with WUWM. An example of competing with WUWM would be breaking a story for another news outlet before reporting the story for WUWM.

2. WUWM journalists must get written permission for all outside freelance or journalistic work. Requests should be submitted in writing to the employee's immediate supervisor. Approval will not be unreasonably denied if the proposed work will not discredit WUWM, conflict with WUWM's interests, create a conflict of interest for the employee or interfere with the employee's ability to perform WUWM duties. Supervisors must respond within seven days of receiving a request.

3. WUWM journalists may not engage in public relations work, paid or unpaid. Exceptions may be made for certain volunteer nonprofit, nonpartisan activities, such as participating in the work of a church or synagogue or charitable organization, so long as this would not conflict with the interests of WUWM in reporting on activities related to that charity. When in doubt, employees should consult their supervisor.

4. In general, WUWM journalists may not do outside work for government or agencies principally funded by government, or for private organizations that are regularly covered by WUWM. This includes work that would be done on leaves of absence. There may be instances in which such work will be approved after consultation with the journalist's supervisor.

5. WUWM journalists may not ghostwrite or co-author articles or books with people they cover, or write reports – such as annual reports – for government agencies, institutions or businesses that we cover.



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6. WUWM journalists must get approval from their supervisor for speaking to groups that might have a relationship to a subject that WUWM may cover. Generally, WUWM journalists may not speak at corporation or industry functions. WUWM journalists also may not speak in settings where their appearance is being used by an organization to market its services or products, unless it is marketing WUWM, and then only as permitted in Section IX, Item 3 (below). WUWM journalists are permitted to engage in promotional activities for books they have written (such as a book tour), although they are expected to get approval from their supervisors on scheduling.

7. WUWM journalists may only accept speaking fees from educational or nonprofit groups not engaged in significant lobbying or political activity. Determining whether a group engages in significant lobbying or political activity is the responsibility of the journalist seeking permission, and all information must be fully disclosed to the journalist's supervisor.

8. WUWM journalists may not speak to groups where the journalist's appearance might put in question his or her impartiality. Such instances include situations where the employee's appearance may appear to endorse the agenda of a group or organization.

9. WUWM journalists must get permission from the General Manager to appear on TV or other media. It is not necessary to get permission in each instance when the employee is a regular participant on an approved show. Permission for such appearances may be revoked if WUWM determines they raise questions about the journalist's impartiality.

10. In appearing on TV or other media, WUWM journalists should not express views they would not air in their role as journalists on WUWM's programs. They should not participate in shows that encourage punditry and speculation rather than fact-based analysis.

11. Any WUWM journalist intending to write a non-fiction book or TV or movie script or other guiding documents for non-radio productions based in whole or substantial part on assignments they did for WUWM must notify WUWM in writing of such plans before entering into any agreement with respect to that work. WUWM will respond in a timely manner as to whether it has any objections to the project.

12. WUWM journalists considering book projects or TV or movie productions based on stories that they have covered must be careful not to give any impression they might benefit financially from the outcome of news events.

13. WUWM journalists must not author or post, to a public website, blog or chatroom, any comments regarding political, social or other issues which may be discussed on WUWM broadcasts.



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**VI. Personal Gain, Gifts, Freebies, Loaned Equipment or Merchandise, etc.**

1. WUWM journalists may not accept compensation, including property or benefits of any kind, from people or institutions they cover. WUWM journalists may accept gifts of token value (hats, mugs, t-shirts, etc.). Unsolicited items of significant value will be returned with a letter thanking the sender but stating our policy on gifts. WUWM journalists pick up the check when they can (i.e., they are not wined and dined by sources); WUWM journalists pay for their own travel in accordance with WUWM's travel policy. There are certain instances – such as conferences and conventions – where food is provided as a convenience for the press as a whole, and in such instances it is acceptable to take advantage of this. In addition, WUWM journalists may accept paid travel and meals for speaking engagements and awards ceremonies that are approved under the standards in Section V of this document.

2. WUWM journalists must conduct themselves at all times in a manner that leaves no grounds for belief, or even the appearance, that information they have gathered on the job has been used for personal gain, financial or otherwise.

3. WUWM journalists may not use any nonpublic information acquired at work for personal gain, or use their association with WUWM for personal gain. No WUWM journalist may disclose information acquired by WUWM to anyone inside or outside of WUWM if the intent is to use that information for personal or institutional gain. This prohibition does not apply to accepted journalistic practices, such as sharing information as a member of a news "pool."

4. WUWM journalists pay their own way in newsgathering, except in unusual circumstances (like going into battle with the military). They will be reimbursed by WUWM in accordance with travel and reimbursement policies. The General Manager must approve any exceptions. WUWM journalists may accept free passes to movie screenings, performances or similar activities that are attended for the purpose of doing reviews or stories for the air.

5. WUWM journalists cannot sell items like books, CDs, etc., that are received at WUWM for review. They belong to WUWM. They may be distributed to staff for their personal use (which may include donations to charities) after they are no longer needed.

6. WUWM journalists cannot keep any equipment or items of value provided by a company for test-use for story purposes. Such items must be disclosed to the journalist's supervisor and are to be disposed of in accordance with the ethical practices stated in this document, which usually means returning such items to the provider.



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## **VII. Ethical Conduct in Coverage of News**

1. Plagiarism is an unforgivable offense. WUWM journalists do not take other peoples' work and present it as our own.

2. WUWM News puts its highest value on firsthand news gathering and confirmation of facts, as opposed to relying on material from other sources.

3. WUWM journalists must take special care in the use they make of information from wire service stories, reports by other broadcast news organizations, newspaper clips or articles in other publications.

- Wire services: There is one category of quotation from wire services where it is acceptable to use quotes without attribution. That is where an AP story is about some public event – like a press conference, speech by a public official in a public setting, an official statement of a government agency, a congressional hearing, and the like. In those cases, we reasonably expect that AP is a reliable conveyor of those quotes. However, reporters and editors must use caution and check source material if there is reason to believe that a quote has been inaccurately reported or has been taken out of its proper context.
- When using material from newspaper stories, WUWM journalists must double-check "facts" and other material gleaned from those stories. Too often, incorrect information is passed down from one news story to another because of the failure of one news organization to get it right. WUWM should never pass on errors in this way.

4. WUWM journalists are generous in giving credit to other news organizations for stories that demonstrate enterprise or contain exclusive information. If their story inspires us to replicate it, we should give credit even if we use different sources and materials. If there is any doubt about whether to credit another news organization, ask the News Director / Executive Producer.

5. WUWM journalists must treat the people they cover fairly and with respect. They always keep in mind that gathering and reporting information may cause harm or discomfort, and they weigh that against the importance of the story. WUWM journalists show sensitivity when seeking or using interviews of those affected by tragedy or grief. They show special sensitivity when dealing with children and inexperienced or unsophisticated sources or subjects, or individuals who have difficulty understanding the language in which they are being interviewed.



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6. Dealing with minors (generally defined as anyone under the age of 18) always invokes legal issues. An interview of a minor about a sensitive subject requires a WUWM journalist to secure permission from the minor's parent or legal guardian. Examples of sensitive subjects include cheating, sexual activity, involvement in gangs or crime, difficult family relationships, probation violation, out-of-wedlock pregnancy or parenthood, victims' sexual abuse and similar topics that could have legal ramifications or lead to embarrassment. An interview of a minor in a special custodial situation, such as foster care, juvenile detention, or holding facilities for illegal immigrants, requires the consent of the person who has custody of the minor.

An interview on a non-sensitive topic (normal childhood activities, sports, books, movies, trips to the zoo, baseball and the like) does not require consent although WUWM will only identify these students by their first name.

Generally, however, any interview on school premises will require the consent of the school authorities.

Situations like school shootings require special care when interviewing visibly distressed minors who may have witnessed horrific scenes. Witnesses such as teachers or students over 18 are preferable interviewees. If continued interviewing substantially increases the distress of a minor who is a witness, the WUWM journalist should carefully balance the importance and quality of the information being obtained with the interviewee's emotional state and decide whether respect for the witness requires the interview to be ended. The WUWM journalist must also discuss with the News Director or Executive Producer whether that interview should be aired.

In cases where there is even a hint of doubt about whether to get consent, the WUWM journalist or supervisor should call the General Manager who will seek appropriate legal advice.

7. WUWM journalists think carefully about the boundaries between legitimate journalistic pursuit and an individual's right to privacy. We 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 to know can justify intrusion into anyone's privacy.

8. WUWM journalists make sure actualities, quotes or paraphrases of those we interview are accurate and are used in the proper context. An actuality from an interviewee or speaker should reflect accurately what that person was asked or was responding to. If we use tape or material from an earlier story, we clearly identify it as such. We tell listeners about the circumstances of an interview if that information is pertinent (such as the time the interview took place, the fact that an interviewee was speaking to us while on the fly, etc.). Whenever it's not clear how an interview was obtained, we should make it clear. The audience deserves more information, not less. The burden is on the WUWM journalist to ensure that our use of such material is true to the meaning the interviewee or speaker intended.

9. Journalism should be conducted in the open. WUWM journalists do not misrepresent themselves: WUWM journalists disclose who they are and don't pose as law enforcement officials, investigators or other such officials. There will be occasions not to declare our profession but rather to seek information as a member of the public working in places to which the general public has access, such as stores, public buildings, etc.



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10. WUWM journalists do not use hidden microphones, recorders or cameras except in unusual circumstances. Occasionally information that serves an important journalistic purpose, such as in reporting on illegal, antisocial or fraudulent activities, cannot be obtained by more open means. In such circumstances, approval must be obtained from a senior supervisor and the General Manager before any taping or photographing takes place. WUWM journalists do not record phone calls without permission.

11. If there is a question of legality in pursuit of a story, WUWM journalists should consult their supervisors and the General Manager. The General Manager will consult with appropriate legal counsel.

12. WUWM journalists do not pay for information from sources or newsmakers. They do not allow sources or interviewees to dictate how a topic will be covered, or which other voices or ideas will be included. They do not agree to submit questions in advance unless a specific instance is approved by the News Director / Executive Producer. If questions are submitted in advance, this will be disclosed in our coverage.

13. WUWM journalists do not sign non-disclosure agreements, except in the rarest of circumstances. Exceptions to this rule must be approved by the News Director / Executive Producer and the General Manager. WUWM journalists respect embargoes on news unless the circumstances surrounding the embargo make adherence to it inappropriate, such as where the information has already surfaced elsewhere or a strong public interest requires the disclosure to place other news in the proper context.

14. Although WUWM journalists do agree to talk to sources on background when necessary, WUWM's strong preference is to have people on the record. Before any information is accepted without full attribution, reporters should make every reasonable effort to get it on the record. If that is not possible, reporters should consider seeking the information elsewhere.

15. When reporters quote anonymous sources, the News Director / Executive Producer has an obligation to satisfy him/herself that the source is credible and reliable, and there is a journalistically justifiable reason to let that person speak without attribution. This obligation also pertains to situations where individuals ask that their real names be withheld. The News Director / Executive Producer has a twofold responsibility: (1) to make a judgment about whether it is editorially justified to let the person speak anonymously or under cover of a pseudonym or partial description, and (2) to satisfy him/herself that this person is who the piece says s/he is. The News Director / Executive Producer should never be in the position of having to verify these things after a story has aired and a question is raised about it. If a pseudonym is used, the reporter must disclose this in the story.

16. When WUWM journalists attribute information in a story to a "source" or "sources," it is assumed that these are the WUWM journalists' sources and that they have obtained the information firsthand. If this is not the case, and the sources are ones quoted by other news organizations, then those sources must be attributed to those other news organizations.

17. WUWM journalists do not show scripts in advance or preview pieces to any person not affiliated with WUWM. A WUWM journalist may review portions of a script or read back a quotation to assure accuracy. A WUWM journalist may also play audio or read transcripts of an interview to a third party if the purpose is to get that party's reaction to what another person has said.





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18. Our corrections policy is to correct substantive errors of fact in a timely way. If a reporter, host, editor or producer believes WUWM got something wrong – or that there was a serious defect in a piece – s/he has an affirmative responsibility to get that on the table for investigation and possible correction. Many times WUWM learns these things when someone outside brings an error to its attention. That is one natural way of finding out. But if WUWM journalists have reason to believe there was a significant error, they should not wait for it to be pointed out. WUWM journalists should err on the side of caution in checking corrections, clarifications or retractions with the News Director / Executive Producer before they air. The General Manager should be consulted if there is any possibility the material in question poses a legal liability. The General Manager will discuss the circumstance with appropriate legal counsel.

19. A reporter or host should make clear when an interview has begun or has ended so there is no question about what is or isn't for broadcast, or what is on the record or not.

20. Archival audio or audio that was obtained from a past story must be identified as such if it is used in a new piece. The listener should not be left to think that any archival or previously obtained audio was gathered in the context of the current piece. As an example, a story updating a controversy surrounding an individual would be misleading if it included new assertions of fact but only used past statements by that individual and failed to identify them as such.

21. In general, the same ethical and editorial standards apply to online journalism that apply to radio journalism.

22. WUWM does not name victims of sexual assaults. There will at times be exceptions – such as certain instances when a victim goes public with his/her identity – and WUWM editors will judge these instances on a case-by-case basis.

### **VIII. Politics, Community and Outside Activities**

1. WUWM journalists may not run for office, endorse candidates or otherwise engage in politics. Since contributions to candidates are part of the public record, WUWM journalists may not contribute to political campaigns, as doing so would call into question a journalist's impartiality in coverage.

2. WUWM journalists may not participate in marches and rallies involving causes or issues that WUWM covers, nor should they sign petitions or otherwise lend their name to such causes, or contribute money to them.

3. WUWM journalists may not serve on government boards or commissions.

4. WUWM journalists may sit on community advisory boards, educational institution trustee boards, boards of religious organizations or boards of nonprofit organizations so long as WUWM does not normally cover them and they are not engaged in significant lobbying or political activity. Such activities should be disclosed to the News Director / Executive Producer, and WUWM may revoke approval if it believes continued service will create the appearance of a conflict of interest or an actual conflict.

5. When a spouse, family member or companion of a WUWM journalist is involved in political activity, the journalist should be sensitive to the fact that this could create real or apparent conflicts of interest. In such instances the WUWM journalist should advise his or her supervisor to determine whether s/he should recuse him or herself from a certain story or certain coverage.

6. WUWM journalists must disclose to their supervisor, any financial donations to a non-profit or charitable organization that exceeds \$999 per calendar year.



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**IX. Underwriting; Foundation Grants; Advertising, Marketing and Promotion**

1. A firewall will be maintained between WUWM journalists and funders. While staff will inevitably end up talking to experts and officials who work at foundations and corporations that fund us (and their grantees), we may not discuss coverage planning with grant-making officials.
2. The General Manager will designate individuals who will serve as contacts with funders for grant-making purposes or other communications.
3. When authorized by the General Manager, WUWM journalists may take part or be asked to take part in promotional activities or events involving supporters of WUWM, such as our fund drives and public radio audience-building initiatives. WUWM journalists are expected to participate in community outreach activities of the radio station and approved by the General Manager.

**X. Application and Enforcement of this Code**

1. Application and enforcement of this Code is the responsibility in the first instance of every WUWM journalist. This responsibility extends to both him/herself and to every other WUWM journalist with whom he/she works. We should feel free to guide ourselves by offering suggestions to our peers to help them comply with their obligations under this Code.
2. The News Director and Executive Producer(s) have special responsibility for application of this Code to matters they are editing or producing. For each story that is produced, they should be satisfied that the standards of this Code have been met.
3. WUWM journalists who do not comply with the Code may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

**XI. Miscellaneous**

1. We do not enter journalism contests or competitions when they are sponsored by groups that have an interest in influencing our coverage. All entries for contests or competitions must be approved by the News Director / Executive Producer or designee.
2. WUWM journalists should not speak on behalf of WUWM, or its policies and practices, unless authorized to do so by appropriate company officials. All media inquiries about WUWM policies and practices must be directed to WUWM's Marketing Department or General Manager.
3. Generally, WUWM journalists may not endorse products or provide blurbs for books, movies or performances using their WUWM identification. The General Manager may make exceptions to this rule, such as when the author of a book is a colleague of the blurb-writer. However, permission will be denied in other circumstances, such as when the author is a politician or someone the WUWM journalist covers. Blurbs drawn accurately and in context from material that has been on our air are permissible.
4. WUWM journalists must not turn over any notes, audio or working materials from their stories or provide information they have observed in the course of their journalistic activities to government officials or parties involved in or considering litigation. If such materials or information are requested pursuant to governmental, administrative or other legal process, WUWM journalists should immediately consult their supervisors and the General Manager.



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5. WUWM owns material that has been collected or produced by WUWM journalists in the course of their duties, irrespective of whether it has been distributed on our air outright, and it may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of WUWM. All work product is owned by WUWM and the Board of Regents and the University of Wisconsin System.

6. The provisions of this code are subject to the employment and other policies made generally applicable to all WUWM employees.