

Wisconsin Public Media Code of Ethics

Wisconsin Public Radio (WPR) and PBS Wisconsin are services of Wisconsin Public Media (WPM), a division of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and the Wisconsin Educational Communications Board (ECB). This code of ethics incorporates and builds upon those provided by the University of Wisconsin System, UW-Madison, the State of Wisconsin, and ECB and is intended to safeguard the integrity of PBS Wisconsin and WPR as trusted public services.

Public Media and the Public Trust

As a valued public service, public media generally, and WPM in particular, have earned the confidence and trust of the public by conducting our work according to principles of editorial integrity throughout our 100+ year history. As stewards of this organization and trust, we must continue to uphold these principles. Specifically, we adopt and adhere to the [Public Media Code of Integrity](#).

The public must be confident that content from PBS Wisconsin and WPR is not influenced by outside interests, commercial pressures, political influences, or the personal perspectives of its staff. We strive, individually and collectively, to engage in ethical behavior that affirms the integrity of our work to serve our audiences and uphold the core of our mission – to inform and educate.

WPM employs individuals in a variety of roles. The care we take in safeguarding the reputation and trust in our work varies based on our roles in the organization, whether they are editorial or non-editorial.

All Wisconsin Public Media Employees

All WPM employees are expected to abide by University and State statutes and policies related to conflicts of interest, outside work activities, and use of state resources. Links to specific policies are provided at the end of this document. In addition, all WPM employees are expected to be vigilant about any political activities that may reflect negatively upon WPM, and all employees are expected to abide by the following:

- Employees may not use their title, organizational affiliation, authority, work time or organization resources while engaged in political or advocacy activity. Political or advocacy activity includes attending political events, campaigning for political or public policy issues or candidates, attending rallies, signing petitions, publishing public statements in favor/against a political cause, making campaign donations or similar activities.
- Employees may not display political or public policy materials on WPM property

including office spaces, vehicles, or any facility where WPM is conducting business or on their person while on work time representing WPM.

- Running for political office or accepting a political appointment may affect your employment status depending on your position and the office or appointment, in compliance with certain FCC regulations and federal election law. Consult with your direct supervisor to obtain prior approval.

Be particularly cautious when using social media and apply the above principles to your use of social media platforms. Assume that all forms of electronic communication (email, text, messaging, etc.) no matter what level of privacy settings utilized could become public. Remember that as a state agency we are accountable to the public and subject to open records laws. When evaluating whether you should share or post certain material, a question to ask yourself is whether you would want your comments to appear on the front page of the newspaper or go viral. Additionally, following the [university's guidelines on social media use](#) is expected.

Journalism Standards for Editorial, Executive and Public Engagement Employees

Our Journalism Standards require a higher duty of accountability and care. While we use the term “Journalism” here, this section applies to all WPM staff who are expected to uphold our journalistic integrity. The Journalism Standards apply to not only those whose official title is “Reporter” or “Producer;” and they extend to those staff with editorial responsibility, executive authority, and those whose roles involve publicly representing the organization. Employees who are expected to adhere to the Journalism Standards work as content creators and journalists, make executive decisions about our work and/or serve as spokespeople for PBS Wisconsin and WPR.

Community involvement is important and valuable for fostering an equitable, democratic and educated society. As WPM staff, we recognize the value of community involvement while also agreeing to avoid circumstances that could lead the public to question our longstanding nonpartisan reputation. We exercise our basic civic rights by voting in national, state, and local elections; participating in voter registration drives; and volunteering for and joining nonpartisan civic, charitable, religious, and social organizations.

WPM recognizes the rights of staff members for freedom of expression and association. As private individuals and within the parameters of these guidelines, staff are free to be creatively and civically engaged in their communities. However, by joining the public media industry, we recognize that certain actions outside of our professional roles can affect the public's trust in our journalism and our overall public media mission. A list of employees covered by the Journalism Standards is designated by the Directors of WPM, WPR and PBS Wisconsin and accountable employees will be notified in writing.

For those employees who fall under the Journalism Standard, the WPM Employees guidelines above apply. These Journalism Standards are an addition to the WPM Employees guidelines.

- We adopt the [Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics](#) as a guide for our conduct to Seek Truth and Report It, Minimize Harm, Act Independently, and Be Accountable and Transparent.
- We recuse ourselves from reporting or advocating on any matters where a real or perceived conflict of interest exists, including matters where we have a personal or financial interest. Where these conflicts of interest arise, we will disclose the conflict to our supervisor(s) who will provide guidance and manage the assignment to cover a matter appropriately.
- We avoid any actions that could portray a real or perceived conflict of interest with our obligation to report fairly on matters of public interest.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND POLICIES

All staff should be aware of and abide by UW System and State of Wisconsin Codes of Ethical Conduct for Employees:

[For UW Academic Staff](#)

[For UW University Staff](#)

[For ECB Staff](#)

Staff are further encouraged to read and be familiar with policies adopted by national public media organizations. Many elements of our policy have been adopted from those of NPR and PBS. If there is a conflict between one of these other policies and WPM's Ethics Policy, the WPM Policy supersedes the others.

[National Public Radio Ethics Policy](#)

[PBS Editorial and Funding Standards](#)