

## **Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct for Production Staff**

(Adapted from the Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct, Radio-Television News Directors Association, 9/14/2000.)

The Community Television Foundation of South Florida, Inc. (CTF), wishing to foster high professional standards for television production and electronic journalism, promote public understanding of, and confidence in the quality of the content of our productions, hereby establishes this Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct for its Production Staff. The following rules shall apply to all employees of CTF who are assigned to production projects, and to (certain other) independent contractors, freelance producers and journalists, as determined by CTF, and others having editorial responsibility in connection with the Programs (hereinafter the "Staff").

### **Preamble**

Staff who deal with content should operate as trustees of the public, producing stories utilizing truth, fairness, integrity and independence, and should stand accountable for their individual actions.

### **Public Trust**

Staff should recognize that their first obligation is to the public.

Staff should:

- Understand that any commitment other than service to the public undermines trust and credibility.
- Recognize that service in the public interest creates an obligation to reflect the diversity of the community and guard against oversimplification of issues or events.
- Provide a full range of information to enable the public to make enlightened decisions.
- Fight to ensure that the public's business is conducted in public.

### **Truth**

Staff should pursue truth aggressively and present stories accurately, in context, and as completely as possible.

Staff should:

- Continuously seek the truth.
- Omit known distortions that obscure the importance of events.
- Clearly disclose the origin of information and label all material provided by outsiders.

Staff should not:

- Report anything known to be false.
- Manipulate images or sounds in any way that is misleading.
- Plagiarize.
- Present images or sounds that are reenacted without informing the public.

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### **Fairness**

Staff should present the information fairly and impartially, placing primary value on significance and relevance.

Staff should:

- Treat all subjects of stories and segments with respect and dignity, showing particular compassion to victims of crime or tragedy.
- Exercise special care when children are involved in a story and give children greater privacy protection than adults.
- Seek to understand the diversity of their community and inform the public without bias or stereotype.
- Present a diversity of expressions, opinions, and ideas in context.
- Present analytical reporting based on professional perspective, not personal bias.

### **Integrity**

Staff should present the information with integrity and decency, avoiding real or perceived conflicts of interest, and respect the dignity and intelligence of the audience as well as the subjects of the story.

Staff should:

- Identify sources whenever possible.
- Clearly label opinion and commentary.
- Guard against extended coverage of events or individuals that fails to significantly advance a story, place the event in context, or add to the public knowledge.
- Refrain from contacting participants in violent situations while the situation is in progress.
- Use technological tools with skill and thoughtfulness, avoiding techniques that skew facts, distort reality, or sensationalize events.
- Use the private transmissions of others only with written permission.

Staff should not:

- Pay sources who have a vested interest in a story.
- Accept gifts, favors, or compensation from those who might, or might be perceived to, seek to influence coverage.
- Engage in activities that may, or, may be perceived to, compromise their integrity or independence.
- Alter program credits, or otherwise change program credits, without specific direction from the Vice President for Production.

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### **Independence**

Staff should defend the independence of all journalists from those seeking influence or control over content.

Staff should:

- Gather information and produce stories without fear or favor, and vigorously resist undue influence from any outside forces, including underwriters, sources, story subjects, powerful individuals, and special interest groups.
- Resist those who would seek to buy or politically influence content or who would seek to intimidate those who produce and disseminate CTF programming.
- Determine story content solely through independent editorial judgment and not as the result of outside influence.
- Resist any self-interest or peer pressure that might erode journalistic duty and service to the public.
- Recognize that program underwriting/sponsorship will not be used in any way to determine, restrict, or manipulate content.
- Refuse to allow the interests of the CTF's Board or management to influence editorial judgment and content inappropriately.
- Defend the rights of the free press for all journalists, recognizing that any professional or government licensing of journalists is a violation of that freedom.

### **Accountability**

Staff should recognize that they are accountable for their actions to CTF, the public, the profession and themselves.

Staff should:

- Actively encourage adherence to these standards by all journalists and their employers.
- Respond to public concerns. Investigate complaints and correct errors promptly and with as much prominence as the original report.
- Explain journalistic processes to the public, especially when practices spark questions or controversy.
- Recognize that staff are duty-bound to conduct themselves ethically.
- Refrain from ordering or encouraging courses of action, which would force employees to commit an unethical act.
- Carefully listen to employees who raise ethical objections and create environments in which such objections and discussions are encouraged.
- Seek support for and provide opportunities to train employees in ethical decision-making.

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Staff covered by this code should:

- Disclose in writing to the Vice President for Production, any potential conflicts, whether real or perceived, in the story approval process and prior to production.
- Not feature family, friends or individuals with whom the staff has (had) a close personal relationship with prior disclosing the personal relationship and receiving written approval from the Vice President for Production.
- Obtain all appropriate written releases prior to production.
- Immediately report any suspected violation of this code to the Vice President for Production, the Chief Operating Officer, and the Vice President for Administrative Services or the President/CEO for further investigation.

In meeting its responsibility to the profession of electronic journalism, RTNDA has created this code to identify important issues, to serve as a guide for its members, to facilitate self-scrutiny, and to shape future debate. CTF has modified this code to meet the needs of the program formats it regularly produces. All staff covered by this code will be held to these standards. Failure to comply with these provisions may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

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This will acknowledge that I have received the *Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct for Production Staff*. I agree to abide by the rules and standards contained therein as a condition of my employment with Community Television Foundation of South Florida, Inc.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date