

AVANT-YOUTH MODEL CODE OF ETHICS

Dearest Reader,

Everyday I preach to my writers: Your first obligation is to the truth, your first loyalty is to your audience. To seek truth and to share it is the two-step goal of any journalist. Though blankly stated, this process is neither simple nor easy to achieve. To help our content creators be true to this goal, we've adopted, adjusted and adhere to rules and guidelines that include a **Code of Ethics** to follow.

Avant-Youth is a nonpartisan media organization for Atlanta's youth. Our mission is to inform the decisions and actions that may lead young people to empower themselves by relaying positive stories, informational resources, and delivering relevant insight and life perspectives. This mission drives our actions, values and principles set forth in our Code of Ethics, which owes its existence to many other fine news institutions before ourselves and that have inspired us.

The Code contains standards of conduct and moral judgments. Some points are specific and inflexible; others may be less rigid due to extenuating circumstances that are exceptional in nature. Some are based on law. The Code answers questions, and we use it to remind ourselves that standards of honesty and performance exist.

A Code of Ethics is not a burden. Rather, a Code is a useful license to practice news and information gathering and publishing. The Code can be used by individuals to measure their work. It can also be used to evaluate the integrity of *Avant-Youth* as a whole. Readers should expect nothing less than the truth in all publications, including our own. By adopting a Code of Ethics, we help safeguard the public trust granted to us.

Team members should view a Code of Ethics as an evolving reference document. It should be revised as needs change, especially as the industry and technology evolve, and it should be compared to other codes for completeness.

As ethics is more a process of decision-making rather than a result, the ethical standards of *Avant-Youth* is the product of discussion and debate, guided by the standards that inform the practices of students, journalists and communications specialists throughout the United States. My hope is that our adoption of and adherence to a Code of Ethics leads to greater credibility and trust amongst *Avant-Youth*, its community as well as its individual members.

Sincerely,

Judith Y. Kim

Editor-in-Chief of *Avant-Youth*

(Credits to Albert DeLuca, Tom Rolnicki, and revisions by Brian Steffen, from the Model Code of Ethics for Collegiate Journalists)

Written: *March 2019*

Revised: *January 2020*

01 Free Travel: To remain as free of influence or obligation to report a story, the writer, in pursuit of a story, should not accept free travel, accommodations or meals related to travel. For convenience, sports reporters may travel on team charters, but *Avant-Youth* should pay the cost of the transportation and related expenses. The same pay-as-you-go policy should apply to non-sports reporting as well, including businesses and governments. Free travel and accommodations that are non-coverage related and provided by a vendor may be accepted, if the primary purpose is for education or training and is related to the fulfillment of an agreement or contract.

02 Gifts: Gifts should not be accepted. Any gift should be politely refused and returned to the sender or sent to a charity. If the gift is of de minimis (no significant) value, such as a desk trinket, small food item or pen, the staff member may retain the gift. As a guideline, if the value is under \$25, the gift may be kept. More than one gift in one year, even if under \$25, from the same giver, may not be accepted. *Avant-Youth* team members should pay their expenses at meals with news sources. When several journalists are invited to an event with news value, such as a dinner with a senior official, team members may accept so long as an effort is made to reciprocate with the official or a staff member.

03 Free Tickets, Passes, Discounts: If money is available, team members assigned to cover a sporting event, lecture, play, concert, movie or other entertainment event should pay for admission. Free tickets or passes may be accepted by team members assigned to cover an event or by those attending for legitimate news purposes. Press facilities at these events may only be used by team members who are assigned to cover the event. Free tickets or passes may be accepted by team members for personal use only if tickets are available on the same complimentary basis to non-journalists.

We do not accept free tickets to sports, entertainment or other events for anything other than coverage purposes. If we obtain tickets for a member or subscriber as a courtesy, they must be paid for, and the member or subscriber should reimburse *Avant-Youth*.

Avant-Youth team members may accept discounts from companies only if those discounts are standard and offered to other customers.

04 Favors: Team members must not ask news sources or others they meet in a professional capacity to extend jobs or other benefits to anyone. They also must not offer jobs, internships or any benefits of being an *Avant-Youth* team member to news sources.

05 Ownership of Books, Records, DVDs, Other Products Given for Review: Any materials given to the publication for review become the property of the publication and not of any individual team member. The editor-in-chief reserves the right to disperse the property in an equitable way. Items received for review may be kept for a staff member's professional reference or donated to charities, but may not be sold or raffled off for personal gain. In cases where restrictions forbid transfer to third parties, these items should be discarded. Items of more than nominal value that are provided for testing, such as electronics, must be returned.

06 Other Campus Media Work: To avoid a conflict of interest, a team member should not hold similar positions on two or more public information or public relations media organizations.

07 Online Media Work: Content creators working with *Avant-Youth* may consider starting their own blog or digital media sites to serve their own interests. However, care should be taken:

keep in mind the potential consequences of their decision on *Avant-Youth*. As long as *Avant-Youth* is notified and given rights to publish relevant content first to serve its mission in its respective community, precautions have been adequately taken.

08 Other Freelance Media Work: Approval of freelance media work should be sought in advance of the commitment from your respective editor. It is permissible only in a non-competitive medium, on a staffer's own time and should not conflict with the staffer's obligations to *Avant-Youth*. Individuals who seek to engage in non-AY work are subject to the following restrictions:

- A senior editor must be advised in advance of all freelance work.
- Freelance work must not represent a conflict of interest for either the team member or *Avant-Youth*.
- Such activities may not interfere with the team member's responsibilities, including availability for newsgathering.
- Such activities may not exploit the name of *Avant-Youth* or the team member's position with AY without permission of the AY.
- Employees who wish to use material they accumulated in their AY work – notes, stories (either written or broadcast), images, videotape, graphics - for other-than-AY uses must seek written AY approval, copyright clearance and a license to syndicate. This approval must be received prior to submission to any outside publisher, purchaser, organization broadcaster, or to posting on websites or social networks.

Under no circumstances should *Avant-Youth* incur expenses for research material that is not used for AY purposes.

09 Social Networks: The individual use of social media by *Avant-Youth* team members is held to the same high standards as reporting, communication and distribution over any other medium. Those standards include, but are not limited to:

- Avoiding expressions of opinion on contentious issues, even in supposedly password-protected conversations.
- Getting explicit permission when seeking to distribute copyrighted material; any breaking news exceptions should be cleared by a senior manager.
- Not disseminating rumors and unconfirmed reports, and attributing information.
- Carefully verifying information and content before it is distributed.
- Transparently correcting errors on all platforms on which the erroneous material was distributed.

AY team members are encouraged to maintain accounts on social networks, and must identify themselves in their profiles as being with AY if they use the accounts for work in any way. We must not share AY proprietary/confidential information or include political affiliations or preferences. If we retweet or otherwise share opinionated material by others, we should add language that makes it clear we're reporting someone else's opinions. In social posts related to sports/entertainment, we must steer clear of both trash-talking and over-the-top, fawning praise directed at teams, athletes and celebrities. Posts/tweets aimed at gathering opinions for a story must make clear that we are looking for voices on all sides of an issue.

Team members are encouraged to share AY content in all formats to social platforms. *We should do so by using the "share" buttons on apps, browsers and sites that cause an item to be posted, or by posting a link to the content. We should not manually upload or copy and paste published photos, videos or the full text of published stories into individual social accounts.* Team

members should not upload directly to social networks images they captured that closely resemble those that *Avant-Youth* is publishing.

Team members may share content from other news organizations, but we should be mindful of potential competitive issues and refrain from sharing unconfirmed material. We should also keep in mind that denouncing fellow users, newsmakers or anyone else can reflect badly on AY and may one day harm a colleague's ability to get important information from a source. Team members must not post any information that might endanger a colleague, and shouldn't post about a missing or detained AY teammate without clearance from senior AY managers.

AY teammates who have confirmed urgent breaking news should not share that information over social accounts until they have provided it to the appropriate editor's desk and done any immediate reporting work that is asked of them. Exclusive material and important tips should not be shared online before the related story has been published.

If an AY-official tweet or social media posting contains an error of fact, emphasis or tone, the tweet or posting promptly should be removed from the platform where it occurred, followed by a note acknowledging the deletion and a substitute corrected tweet or posting issued where appropriate.

10 Outside Appearances: Team members may appear on radio and TV news programs as panelists asking questions of newsmakers; such appearances are encouraged. However, there is potential for conflict if team members are asked to give their opinions on issues or personalities of the day. *Advance discussion and clearance from a team member's supervisor are required.*

Team members may speak or teach at the invitation of news industry groups and educational institutions. *Avant-Youth* accepts reimbursement of expenses for such appearances if the event is one that *Avant-Youth* would not routinely participate in. AY team members may accept honoraria, with a supervisor's approval, for appearances and teaching that require substantial preparation. We do not normally accept honoraria for routine speeches and panel discussions. We avoid addressing, or accepting fees or expenses from, governmental bodies; trade, lobbying or special interest groups; businesses, or labor groups; or any group that would pose a conflict of interest.

11 Political activities: Editorial teammates are expected to be scrupulous in avoiding any political activity, whether they cover politics regularly or not. They may not run for political office or accept political appointment; nor may they perform public relations work for politicians or their groups. Under no circumstances should they donate money to political organizations or political campaigns. They should use great discretion in joining or making contributions to other organizations that may take political stands.

Non-editorial team members must refrain from political activity and contributions unless they obtain approval from a senior editor. A supervisor must be informed when a spouse or other members of an employee's household have any ongoing involvement in political causes, either professionally or personally.

12 Conflicts of Interest, Relationships and Coverage: *Avant-Youth* respects and encourages the rights of its team members to participate actively in civic, charitable, religious, public, social or neighborhood organizations. However, *Avant-Youth* team members must avoid behavior or activities that could create a conflict of interest or compromise our ability to report the news fairly and accurately, uninfluenced by any person or action. Nothing in this policy is intended to abridge any rights provided by the National Labor Relations Act.

Here is a sampler of *Avant-Youth's* practices on questions involving possible conflict of interest. *It is not all-inclusive; if you are unsure whether an activity may constitute a conflict or the appearance of a conflict, consult your managing editor at the onset.*

Team members must declare conflicts and avoid involvement in stories dealing with members of their own families. Team members should not cover (in words, photographs, video or otherwise, or make news judgments about) family members or persons with whom they have financial, adversarial, romantic, sexual or closely personal relationships. Intra-staff dating is not recommended if one person assigns or evaluates the work of the other person, or if one is in a position to promote the other to a higher staff position.

13 Use of Alcohol While On Assignment: When covering an event where alcohol is served, team members should not accept free drinks unless all drinks are free to everyone in attendance. In any and every case, behave yourself.

14 Sexual Harassment: Sexual harassment is: (verbal) suggestive comments, sexual innuendo, threats, insults, jokes about sex-specific traits, sexual propositions; (nonverbal) vulgar gestures, whistling, leering, suggestive or insulting noises; (physical) touching, pinching, brushing the body, coercing sexual intercourse, assault. This conduct is job-related harassment when submission is made implicitly or explicitly a condition of employment, a condition of work-related assignments, compensation and other factors, or if such conduct interferes with the team member's performance or creates a hostile, intimidating or offensive work environment. Sexual harassment is prohibited.

15 Attribution: Anything that *Avant-Youth* publishes that could reasonably be disputed should be attributed. We should give the full name of a source and as much information as needed to identify the source and explain why the person is credible. Where appropriate, include a source's age; title; name of company, organization or government department; and hometown.

If we quote someone from a written document — a report, email or news release — we should say so. Information taken from the internet must be vetted according to our standards of accuracy and attributed to the original source. File, library or archive photos, audio or videos must be identified as such. For lengthy stories, attribution can be contained in an extended editor's note detailing interviews, research and methodology.

16 Data: Data for stories and visual presentations must be vetted for integrity and validity. Data should be assessed in terms of the methodology, sample sizes, when it was collected and the availability of other data to confirm or challenge it. Combining more than one dataset into a presentation should be done carefully and transparently. Avoid percentage and percent change comparisons from a small base, including raw numbers when appropriate for perspective. *Must distinguish carefully between correlations and causal relationships.*

17 Plagiarism of Words, Art, Other: Plagiarism is prohibited and is illegal if the material is copyright protected. For the purposes of this code, plagiarism is defined as: The word-for-word duplication of another person's writing, or close summarization of the work of another source without giving the source proper credit. A comparable prohibition applies to the use of graphics. Information obtained from a published work must be independently verified before it can be reported as a new, original story. This policy also forbids lifting verbatim paragraphs from a wire service without attribution or pointing out that wire stories were used in compiling the story. Material that is published on the Internet should be treated in the same way as if it were

published on a more traditional media platform. Because plagiarism can significantly undermine the public trust of *Avant-Youth*, editors should be prepared to consider severe penalties for documented cases of plagiarism, including dismissal.

18 Fabrication of Any Kind: The use of composite characters or imaginary situations or characters will not be allowed in news or feature stories. Nothing in our news report — words, photos, graphics, sound or video — may be fabricated. A columnist may, occasionally, use such an approach in developing a piece, but it must be clear to the reader that the person or situation is fictional and that the column is commentary and not reporting. The growth of narrative story development (storytelling devices) means that content creators and editors should be especially careful not to mix fact and fiction, and not embellish facts with fictional details, regardless of their significance. We don't use pseudonyms (except for established literary names or noms de guerre, which should be identified as such), composite characters or fictional names, ages, places or dates.

We don't stage or re-enact events for the camera or microphone.

Virtual reality presentations must consist of real, unmanipulated imagery and sound.

Graphics And Interactives: We use only authoritative sources. We do not project, surmise or estimate in a graphic. We create work only from what we know. Except as authorized by a senior editor, we do not use graphics provided by others for which we lack the underlying data. We create charts at visually proper perspectives to give an accurate representation of data. Information must be clear and concise. We do not skew or alter data to fit a visual need. We credit our sources on every interactive and graphic, including graphics for which AY journalists have created the database.

Video: *Avant-Youth* permits the use of subtle, standard methods of improving technical quality, such as adjusting video and audio levels, color correcting due to white balance, eliminating buzzing, hums, clicks, pops, or overly long pauses or other technical faults, and equalization of audio to make the sound clearer — provided the use of these methods does not conceal, obscure, remove or otherwise alter the content of the image. Video can be produced with titles and logos, the images toned and the audio quality improved. When editing audio within a video, generally the specific audio associated with each video shot must be used without alteration. However in cases where music is the principal ambient sound — e.g. when the video portrays a marching band or an orchestra playing - audio may be laid unbroken and video images edited over the top, provided the video was shot contemporaneously and the meaning of the scene is not altered.

Obscuring Identities: We should not use mosaics or blurring to grant anonymity in any AY-created images. Instead we should shoot the subject in silhouette or use other photo or video techniques — such as using the person's shadow naturally cast on a wall or ground — to achieve the goal of anonymity. Exceptions may be granted rarely, when other anonymity techniques have failed, with permission of a senior editor. Images may be treated so that end-users of our content cannot readjust the levels to bring a shadowed face into view. In cases in which anonymity is deemed essential for the safety of the interviewee, the voices of silhouetted persons being interviewed may be digitally distorted with the editor-in-chief's permission strictly for purposes of hiding identity. However any such alteration will be noted and disclosed in the accompanying script or shot list.

Posing and Re-enactments: We do not stage, pose or re-enact events except in the circumstances described here. When we shoot B-roll "walking shot" video, "environmental" portraits of subjects at work, home, etc., or photograph subjects in a studio, care should be taken to avoid misleading viewers to believe that the moment was spontaneously captured in the course

of gathering the news. The precise circumstances of such portraiture must be revealed in the shot-list or caption and special instructions box so it can't be mistaken as an attempt to deceive.

User-generated and Internet content: When obtaining imagery from the internet or any other source, we must be certain it is accurate, un-manipulated, shows what it is said to show and that we have the right to use it. When acquiring user-generated content, we must give priority to the safety of providers and caution them against taking risks. *Avant-Youth* credits them appropriately.

Offensive and Gory content: *Avant-Youth* does not seek to sanitize real events; sometimes a gory or disturbing image is essential to cover a story. However, such imagery must be appropriate and newsworthy, not gratuitous. Care must be taken with images that could be offensive toward religions, nationalities or ethnic groups. In some cases, we may decide not to send such material to consumer-facing platforms, but to distribute it to subscribers – with appropriate warnings – for them to decide on its usage. Special warnings to consumers about disturbing content may be needed for online and virtual reality content. In the rare case that an obscene image is necessary to tell the story, we may blur the portion of the image considered offensive. This must be approved by the editor-in-chief.

19 Audio: *Avant-Youth's* audio content must always be accurate. We do not alter or manipulate actuality in any way, except as provided below:

- With the permission of a senior editor, overly long pauses by news subjects may be shortened.
- To make sound clearer, *Avant-Youth* does permit the use of subtle, standard audio processing methods: normalization of levels, general volume adjustments, equalization and reduction of extraneous sounds such as telephone line noise. *Avant-Youth* does fade in and out of the start and end of sound bites. However, the use of these methods must not conceal, obscure, remove or otherwise alter the content of the audio.
- Bleeping is allowed, with a senior editor's permission, to cover obscenities when there is no option but to use a piece of audio containing an obscenity. A team member with questions about the use of such methods or our requirements and limitations on audio editing should contact the managing editor prior to the transmission of any audio.
- We don't use sound effects or substitute video or audio from one event to another. We do not "cheat" sound by adding audio to embellish or fabricate an event. A senior editor must be consulted prior to the introduction of any neutral sound (ambient sound that does not affect the editorial meaning but corrects a technical fault).
- Voice reports by *Avant-Youth* correspondents may be edited to remove pauses or stumbles.

20 Music: Music added to *Avant-Youth* productions must not have an editorial effect, such as evoking sympathy, suspicion or ridicule. We must have the legal rights to use the material.

21 Electronically Altered Photos: *Avant-Youth's* images must always be accurate. Electronically altering contents of photos for news and feature stories or as stand-alone news and feature photos is not allowed. Exceptions to this would be minor adjustments to contrast and similar technical enhancements that do not affect the truthfulness of the subject and context of the subject or the scene. These include cropping, dodging and burning, conversion into grayscale, elimination of dust on camera sensors and scratches on scanned negatives or scanned prints and normal toning and color adjustments. These should be limited to those minimally necessary for clear and accurate reproduction and that restore the authentic nature of the photograph. Changes in density, contrast, color and saturation levels that substantially alter

the original scene are not acceptable. Backgrounds should not be digitally blurred or eliminated by burning down or by aggressive toning. The removal of "red eye" from photographs is not permissible. Team members with questions about the use of such methods or the AY's requirements and limitations on photo editing should contact a senior photo editor prior to the transmission of any image.

Content may be altered for creative purposes as a special effect for a feature story if the caption or creditline includes that fact and if an average reader would not mistake the photo for reality. Such compositions must not misrepresent the facts and must not result in an image that looks like a photograph — it must clearly be a graphic. These photos are usually tagged as photo illustrations. Similarly, when we alter photos to use as graphics online, we retain the integrity of the image, limiting the changes to cropping, masking and adding elements like logos. It is permissible to display photos online using techniques such as 360-degree panoramas or dissolves as long as they do not alter the original images. Otherwise, readers expect photos and stories to be truthful.

We avoid the use of photos or video that could unfairly link people in the images to illicit activity.

22 Use of Photographs of Victims of Accidents, Fires, Natural Disasters: Photos have a tremendous impact on readers. The question of privacy versus the public's right to know should be considered. The line between good and bad taste, reality and sensationalism is not always easy to draw. Care should be taken to maintain the dignity of the subject as much as possible without undermining the truth of the event. In making a final decision on a photo of this type, an editor should consider: Do the readers need information from this photo that helps explain the event better than words or another photo? Who is hurt by the publication of this photo? How would I react if my photograph was taken at such a moment of tragedy and anguish?

23 Reporting Names, Addresses of Crime Victims: Team members need to know the state laws that govern the publication of names of crime victims. We generally do not identify, in text or images, those who say they have been sexually assaulted or subjected to extreme abuse. We may identify victims of sexual assault or extreme abuse when victims publicly identify themselves; however, it is possible to ask victims of sexual assault to identify themselves for publication. This may be negotiated between the victim and *Avant-Youth*. Victims of nonsexual crimes may be identified, but we have the responsibility to give some protection to the victims. With the exception of major crimes, predetermined by the editor, an arrested person is not named until charges are filed. However, to avoid a subjective list of exceptions, it is acceptable to withhold all names, regardless of the crime, until charges are formally filed.

We generally do not identify minors who are accused of crimes or who are witnesses to them. Identification of such minors must be approved by the editor-in-chief; it may depend on the severity of the alleged crime; whether police have formally released the juvenile's name; and whether the juvenile has been formally charged as an adult. Other considerations might include public safety, such as when the youth is the subject of a manhunt; or widespread publication of the juvenile suspect's name, making the identity de facto public knowledge.

24 Cooperation with Law Enforcement, Governments, College Administration: To remain independent, *Avant-Youth* does not take over any of the duties of any outside agency; cooperation or involvement in the work of these agencies should be restricted to what is required by law. Team members should know any freedom of information, open meetings and shield laws that apply to their work. If a team member thinks any public authority is interfering with the team

member's functions, the incident should be reported to the editor. The editor should then seek advice from groups such as the Student Press Law Center, American Civil Liberties Union, or an editor or media attorney for a nearby, non-student publication.

25 Scrutiny of a Public Person's Life: Conflicts exist between a person's desire for privacy and the public good or the public's right to know about a public person's life. People who freely choose to become public celebrities or public servants should expect a greater level of scrutiny of their life than a private person – even a private person who suddenly is involved in a public situation. Journalists should make judgements based on the real news value of the situation, exercising common sense and decency. Reporters, photographers and videographers should not badger a person who has made it clear that he or she does not want to be interviewed or photographed. One exception is those who are involved in criminal activity or in court. Publishing intimate details of a person's life, such as their health or sexual activities, should be done with extreme care and only if the facts are important for the completeness of a story and reflect, in a significant way, upon the person's public life.

26 Profane, Vulgar Words, Explicit Sexual Language: *Avant-Youth's* primary audience are young people. Profane and vulgar words are a part of everyday conversation, but are not used for scholarly or general audience writing. During the interview stage of news-gathering, team members will encounter interviewees who use words viewed as vulgar and profane. The team may publish these words if the words are important to the reader's understanding of the situation – the realities of life – or if the words help establish the character of the interviewee. The team may decide to limit references to prevent the vulgar or profane language from overshadowing the other, more important facts of the story. Profane and vulgar words are generally not acceptable for opinion writing (like columns, editorials and other commentary. Though they may be vulgar or profane, individual words are not obscene). Explicit language (but not vulgar, street jargon) describing sexual activities, human body parts and functions should be used sparingly and with specific purpose: for accurate reporting of health stories or, in a more limited way, for sexual crime stories.

27 Sexist Language: Team members should avoid sexist labels and descriptive language. Replace such language with neutral terms and descriptions.

28 Obscenities, Hate And Propaganda: *Avant-Youth* resists being used as a conduit for speech or images that espouse hate or spread propaganda. When hate speech or images are the basis of a story, it is often sufficient to briefly refer to the speech or images in a text story rather than carry the speech or propaganda at length or redistribute the images. A senior editor must vet any material showing hostages or conveying kidnappers' statements or demands. Quoting from such materials should be kept to the minimum necessary to convey the story and must note that the hostage is speaking under duress.

We do not use obscenities, racial epithets or other offensive slurs in stories unless they are part of direct quotations and there is a compelling reason for them. We do not run imagery of such slurs; the editor-in-chief must be consulted regarding any exceptions.

If a story cannot be told without reference to slurs, we must first try to find a way to give the reader a sense of what was said without using the specific word or phrase. If a profanity, obscenity or vulgarity is used, the content must be flagged at the top, advising editors of what the offensive material is.

We do not refer readers to websites that are obscene, racist or otherwise offensive, and we must not directly link from stories to such sites. We link our text content to the least offensive image necessary to tell the story. For photo galleries and interactive presentations we alert readers to the nature of the material in the link and on the opening page of the gallery or interactive.

29 Negative Stereotyping: Staffers should take care to avoid applying commonly thought but usually erroneous group stereotypes to individuals who are a member of a particular group. Generalizations, often based upon stereotypes, can be misleading and inaccurate. In a broader sense, writers, photographers, videographers and artists should avoid more subtle stereotyping in their selection of interviewees and subjects of photographs, videos or illustrations. *Avant-Youth* also avoids sexual stereotyping in choice of subjects for stories, photographs and illustrations on sports or political or social issues such as equal rights.

30 Use of Racial, Ethnic, Religious, Sexual Orientation, Other Group Identifiers: Identification of a person as a member of any population group should be limited to those cases when that membership is essential for the reader's complete understanding of the story; it should be done with great care so as not to perpetuate negative or positive group stereotyping. When identifiers are used, it is important that the correct one be used. Some examples of identifiers: Hispanic, Jew, lesbian, Italian, person with AIDS (PWA), physically challenged, deaf (or partially deaf). Please consult the style manual of the Associated Press for guidance in properly and accurately identifying individuals on the basis of their membership in ethnic or religious groups or on the basis of their sexual orientation.

31 False Identity, Stolen Documents, Concealed Recording, Eavesdropping: In the ordinary course of reporting, no staffers shall misrepresent themselves as anything other than representatives of *Avant-Youth*. In extraordinary circumstances, when an editor judges that the information cannot be gathered in any other way and the value of that information to the readers is important, the editor may authorize a misrepresentation. Staffers may not steal or knowingly receive stolen materials regardless of the importance to a story. Except in situations judged by an editor as extraordinary, a staffer shall not record an interview or meeting without the interviewee's permission or the obvious placement of a recording device (not hidden) at the start of the interview or meeting, in which case the interviewee does not object and is aware of the presence of the recording device. Committing an illegal act to eavesdrop on a source is not allowed. *Please refer to the O.C.G.A. § 16-11-62 handout.

32 Granting & Preserving Confidentiality to Sources: A reporter should never promise confidentiality to a source without the permission of the editor. Confidentiality should only be given if there is a real danger that physical, emotional or financial harm will come to the source if his or her name was revealed. The editor should have all contacts and the source's name before the decision is made. The editor should know of any laws pertaining to confidentiality and disclosure before a decision is made. A reporter should make every attempt to get the same information from another source who agrees to be named since the goal is to attribute all information to a specific source for all stories. At *Avant*, we believe that truth can only be made possible with accountability.

33 Anonymous Sources: Generally, anonymous sources are not used. Information that comes from an unnamed/unknown source should not be used unless it can be verified through

another, known source. If two independent sources verify the information and both are unnamed, an editor may decide to publish after careful consideration of the need for immediateness and the news value of the information.

Transparency is critical to our credibility with the public. Whenever possible, we pursue information on the record. When a newsmaker insists on background or off-the-record ground rules, we must adhere to a strict set of guidelines, enforced by *Avant-Youth's* managers. Under our rules, material from anonymous sources may be used only if:

1. The material is information and not opinion or speculation, and is vital to the report.
2. The information is not available except under the conditions of anonymity imposed by the source.
3. The source is reliable, and in a position to have direct knowledge of the information.

Reporters who intend to use material from anonymous sources must get approval from their editors before sending the story to the desk. The editor is responsible for vetting the material and making sure it meets AP guidelines. The editor must know the identity of the source, and is obligated, like the reporter, to keep the source's identity confidential. Only after they are assured that the source material has been vetted by a senior editor should writers and producers allow it to be used.

Reporters should proceed with interviews on the assumption they are on the record. If the source wants to set conditions, these should be negotiated at *the start of the interview*. At the end of the interview, the reporter should try once again to move onto the record some or all of the information that was given on a background basis.

Stories should be held while attempts are made to reach additional sources for confirmation or elaboration. In rare cases, one source will be sufficient — when material comes from an authoritative figure who provides information so detailed that there is no question of its accuracy.

We must explain in the story why the source requested anonymity. And, when it's relevant, we must describe the source's motive for disclosing the information. If the story hinges on documents, as opposed to interviews, the reporter must describe how the documents were obtained, at least to the extent possible. The story also must provide attribution that establishes the source's credibility; simply quoting "a source" is not allowed. We should be as descriptive as possible: "According to university officials" or "a supervisor of the alleged." The description of a source must never be altered without consulting the reporter.

We must not say that a person declined comment when that person is already quoted anonymously. *We should not attribute information to anonymous sources when it is obvious or well known. We should just state the information as fact.*

Stories that use anonymous sources must carry a reporter's byline. If a reporter other than the bylined staffer contributes anonymous material to a story, that reporter should be given credit as a contributor. All complaints and questions about the authenticity or veracity of anonymous material — from inside or outside *Avant-Youth* — must be promptly brought to the editor-in-chief's attention.

Not everyone understands "off the record" or "on background" to mean the same things. Before any interview in which any degree of anonymity is expected, there should be a discussion in which the ground rules are set explicitly. These are the Associated Press's definitions:

- *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. 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.

- 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.

34 Quotations: Quotes must not be taken out of context. We do not alter quotations, even to correct grammatical errors or word usage. If a quotation is flawed because of grammar or lack of clarity, it may be paraphrased in a way that is completely true to the original quote. If a quote's meaning is too murky to be paraphrased accurately, it should not be used. Ellipses must not alter the speaker's meaning. When relevant, stories should provide information about the setting in which a quotation was obtained — for example, a press conference, phone interview or hallway conversation with the reporter. The source's body language — perhaps a smile or deprecatory gesture — is sometimes as important as the quotation itself. Quotes from one language to another must be translated faithfully. If appropriate, we should note the language spoken.

Internal editing of audio soundbites of newsmakers is not permitted. Shortened soundbites by cutaway or other video transition are permitted as long as the speaker's meaning is not altered or misconstrued.

35 No Response from Subject: We must make significant efforts to reach anyone who may be portrayed in a negative way in our content, and we must give them a reasonable amount of time to get back to us before we publish. If the subject of a story does not respond to a reporter's inquiry, the reporter may use the failure to respond in the story. However, use the verb "refused" to respond cautiously because of its connotation. It is often better to use "declined" or "would not respond." If the subject cannot be reached, it is acceptable to say that the subject was not available for comment. The difference between not responding and not available for comment should be clear to the reader.

36 Sources on the Internet: Reporters who use the Internet and e-mail to interview sources should identify themselves as a reporter immediately, and *should verify the source's identity with a follow-up telephone call*. The source should be told that the information given is for a story. Information from Internet chat rooms and bulletin boards should not be used except as background or if it is used, it should be attributed as "from the Internet." Since some information on the Internet may not be accurate, verification of facts through another source is especially important. A particular concern is information from user-generated sites such as Wikipedia, YouTube, blogs, Facebook and others. While not necessarily inaccurate, such sites allow users to post information and allegations without the due diligence and integrity of editing or fact-checking.

37 Corrections: An inaccuracy is never knowingly published. Staffers must notify supervisory editors as soon as possible of serious errors or potential errors, whether in their work or that of a colleague. Every effort should be made to contact the team member and supervisor before a correction is sent.

If any error is found, *Avant-Youth* is obligated to correct the error as soon as possible, regardless of the source of the error. When we're wrong, we must say so as soon as possible. When we make a correction, we point it out in ways that news consumers can see it. A correction must always be labeled a correction. We do not use euphemisms such as "recasts," "fixes,"

"clarifies," "minor edits" or "changes" when correcting a factual error. Clarifications may also be labeled and published in the same manner. For online media, any corrections and clarifications will be prominently displayed on the same page where the original story is located. Even in the age of the Internet, journalism is still regarded as 'the first rough draft of history.' As such, content creators should always keep in mind the impacts their factual errors may have on the future record of a person or event.

Audio correspondent reports that contain factual errors are eliminated and, when possible, replaced with corrected reports.

38 Ownership of Work: Regardless of whether a staffer is paid or a volunteer, the publication owns the published and unpublished work done by staffers if the work was done as a staff assignment. Ownership of unpublished work may revert to the staffer at a certain time if the editor-in-chief agrees with this arrangement. The publication has unlimited use of the work. The act of voluntarily joining our staff indicates approval of this policy. *Avant-Youth* developed a document transferring ownership to be signed by readers who submit materials for consideration.

39 Use Of Others' Material: An AY staffer who reports and writes a story must use original content, language and phrasing. We do not plagiarize, meaning that we do not take the work of others and pass it off as our own. When we match a report that news outlet was first with due to significant reporting effort, we should mention that the other outlet first reported it.

At the same time, it is common for team members to include in their work passages from previous AY stories by other writers — generally background, or boilerplate. This is acceptable if the passages are short. Regardless, the reporter writing the story is responsible for the factual and contextual accuracy of the material. Also, *Avant-Youth* often has the right to use material from its members and subscribers; as with material from other news media, we credit it.

Unless we are clearly retransmitting in full a story by a member outlet, we do not transmit stories in their original form; we rewrite them, so that the approach, content, structure and length meet our requirements and reflect the broader audience we serve. Under no circumstances can news releases be published in their original form; we can use information, quotes and properly cleared images from releases, but we must judge the material's credibility, augment it with information from other sources, and then prepare our own stories, with the release material duly credited. Pickups of audio and of television graphics are credited in billboards/captions when the source requests it.

40 Separation of Reporting from Commentary: To help readers separate fact-based reporting from commentary – in the form of personal columns, editorials, analysis and similar opinion writing – all commentary should be labeled or somehow clearly and consistently identified as opinion, especially when it is outside the editorial or op-ed section and mixed with fact-based reporting.

41 Influence of Advertisers: Editors should guard against attempts made by advertisers and others in the business office to influence *Avant-Youth's* editorial content. The editorial staff reserves the right to make all decisions about any editorial coverage an advertiser may get in the publication, including advertising supplements or review, which will be stated as such. Readers should not perceive that an advertiser is getting favorable editorial mention simply because the advertiser has bought space in the publication.

42 Acceptance of Reader Feedback: Editors and reporters should invite reader feedback and participation in the publication. Reaction by readers to what has been published should be invited through all methods of communication: snail mail, e-mail, website discussion boards, phone and in-person visits.

43 Checklist: Through all steps in the reporting process, from conceptualizing the story assignment through information gathering and pre-writing, to writing, editing and finally publishing, a reporter must answer these questions:

1. Why am I reporting the story or this content?
2. Is the story/content fair?
3. Have I attempted to report all angles?
4. Who will the story affect?
5. Can I defend my decision to report the story? Can I defend my decision to create this content?

Normally, you as the reporter or content creator will consult with your editor regarding these questions, especially if the answers are troublesome.