

# Children's Rights and Media: Guidelines and Principles for Reporting on Issues Involving Children

*These guidelines were adopted by journalists' organisations from 70 countries at the world's first international consultative conference on journalism and child rights held in Recife, Brazil, on May 2nd 1998.*

All journalists and media professionals have a duty to maintain the highest ethical and professional standards and should promote within the industry the widest possible dissemination of information about the International Convention on the Rights of the Child and its implications for the exercise of independent journalism.

Media organizations should regard violation of the rights of children and issues related to children's safety, privacy, security, their education, health and social welfare and all forms of exploitation as important questions for investigations and public debate. Children have an absolute right to privacy, the only exceptions being those explicitly set out in these guidelines.

Journalistic activity which touches on the lives and welfare of children should always be carried out with appreciation of the vulnerable situation of children.

Journalists and media organizations shall strive to maintain the highest standards of ethical conduct in reporting children's affairs and, in particular, they shall

1. strive for standards of excellence in terms of accuracy and sensitivity when reporting on issues involving children;
2. avoid programming and publication of images which intrude upon the media space of children with information which is damaging to them;
3. avoid the use of stereotypes and sensational presentation to promote journalistic material involving children;
4. consider carefully the consequences of publication of any material concerning children and shall minimise harm to children;
5. guard against visually or otherwise identifying children unless it is demonstrably in the public interest;
6. give children, where possible, the right of access to media to express their own opinions without inducement of any kind;
7. ensure independent verification of information provided by children and take special care to ensure that verification takes place without putting child informants at risk;
8. avoid the use of sexualised images of children;
9. use fair, open and straight forward methods for obtaining pictures and, where possible, obtain them with the knowledge and consent of children or a responsible adult, guardian or carer;
10. verify the credentials of any organization purporting to speak for or to represent the interests of children;
11. not make payment to children for material involving the welfare of children or to parents or guardians of children unless it is demonstrably in the interest of the child.

Journalists should put to critical examination the reports submitted and the claims made by Governments on implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in their respective countries

Media should not consider and report the conditions of children only as events but should continuously report the process likely to lead or leading to the occurrence of these events.

*Recife, Brazil, May 2nd 1998*