**Scenario 1**

Your next broadcast story is on what it’s like to be a benchwarmer for the girls’ basketball team. You have a source who will talk about her experience, but she wants to remain anonymous and have her voice disguised on air. She said she wants to go on the record about the coach not treating her like a valid member of the team.

What do you do?

*While the answers for the scenario will vary, here are some talking points:*

• How do you know when using an anonymous source is appropriate and/or justified? What ethical, legal or journalistic principles help guide your decision?

*Does the content really merit this? Could you talk to another benchwarmer about her experience?*

• When (or if) should names of victims be used? Another question here is whether to use alleged perpetrator names (rape victims and alleged attackers, for example).

*Based on the information given, it’s not a situation of the person being victimized in some way.*

• Is the story crucial to the public?

*Based on the information given, again, this isn’t the case.*

• Is the information this source will provide crucial to the story?

*Based on the information given, again, this isn’t the case.*

• Can the information be corroborated?

*Yes, but someone else could easily go on the record.*

• Do you trust the source? Why?

• Is there any other way to get the story?

*Based on the information given, the person’s story could easily be obtained using another benchwarmer.*

• Does this source have first-hand knowledge of what he or she is describing?

*Yes, but she’s not the only one.*

• Does the source benefit from your publication of the story? Who else might benefit, lose?

*The source really has no reason to be anonymous.*

• Would the source be harmed by publication or his or her name? Can your make that clear to the audience?

*No*

**Scenario 2**

You’re working on a story about sexting. You found a student who says he has been sexually harassed by another student in this way. He will talk, but only if he’s anonymous. The person he’s accused of doing this to also wants to speak — but only if it’s anonymously as well.

What do you do?

*While the answers for the scenario will vary, here are some talking points:*

• Whether students feel use of anonymous sources is justified and why or why not?

*This is a case in which you have a possible victim and a possible victimizer.*

• Whether it could depend on the situation or topics, and why or why not?

*Could depend on if this is the only way to get the information out about the situation.*

• Whether there is any difference between their use depending on the medium involved – print, online, other; commercial or scholastic; newsmedia or other types, like magazine or yearbook

*Student commentary will vary on this question.*

• How do you know when using an anonymous source is appropriate and/or justified? What ethical, legal or journalistic principles help guide your decision?

*Is this the only way to get out the information? What is the story the sources are giving?*

• Does the article have credibility?

*Has anyone corroborated these two were involved in the act? Who? What do they have to gain from the story?*

Depending on your story situation, these questions might also be factors and need to be addressed:

• When (or if) should names of victims be used? Another question here is whether to use alleged perpetrator names (rape victims and alleged attackers, for example).

*This is a clear example of this.*

• If reporters use the names of alleged perpetrators, should they also use the names of alleged victims?

*This is a clear example of this. What are the attitudes in naming both the alleged victim and alleged perpetrator?*

Specific questions students should consider could include:

• Is the story crucial to the public?

*Will this story possibly help curb future instances of this?*

• Is the information this source will provide crucial to the story?

*Answers will vary.*

• Can the information be corroborated?

*Can someone verify the information the sources are providing? Is the information true? How do you prove it?*

• Do you trust the source? Why?

*Does the person have anything to gain from telling the story? In this instance, are they seeking attention? Did it really happen?*

• Is there any other way to get the story?

*Answers will vary*

• Does this source have first-hand knowledge of what he or she is describing?

*yes*

• Can you report how the source knows the information?

*Answers may vary.*

• Does the source benefit from your publication of the story? Who else might benefit, lose?

*Is the source seeking the spotlight?*

• Would the source be harmed by publication or his or her name? Can your make that clear to the audience?

*In both instances, the sources potentially could be harmed. The question centers on whether the information from the source can be obtained in a different way.*

**Scenario 3**

You’re the editor of your yearbook. This year, you’ve had a rash of break-ins on your campus. One person walked into the robbery in progress and was assaulted. He will talk, but only on condition of anonymity.

You also talked to the 18 year-old accused of the crime (according to the police report). She agreed to talk, but only on condition of anonymity.

What do you do?

*While the answers for the scenario will vary, here are some talking points:*

• Whether students feel use of anonymous sources is justified and why or why not?

*Answers may vary depending on the alleged victim or alleged aggressor.*

• Whether it could depend on the situation or topics, and why or why not

*It also could be a legal dilemma. If the alleged perpetrator tells the story and incriminates himself or herself, then it could have legal ramifications if the person wants to plead not guilty.*

• Whether there is any difference between their use depending on the medium involved – print, online, other; commercial or scholastic; newsmedia or other types, like magazine or yearbook

• How do you know when using an anonymous source is appropriate and/or justified? What ethical, legal or journalistic principles help guide your decision?

*Again, if you require the victim to be identified, then that person also will be known to his or her assailant. Is this why the alleged perpetrator agreed to talk?*

• Does the article have credibility?

*The source was arrested.*

Depending on your story situation, these questions might also be factors and need to be addressed:

• When (or if) should names of victims be used? Another question here is whether to use alleged perpetrator names (rape victims and alleged attackers, for example).

*Answers will vary.*

• If reporters use the names of alleged perpetrators, should they also use the names of alleged victims?

*Answers will vary.*

• Should information be used from social media sites without verification, even if anonymously?

*What if these were included in the investigation?*

Specific questions students should consider could include:

• Is the story crucial to the public?

*Answers will vary.*

• Is the information this source will provide crucial to the story?

*Answers will vary.*

• Can the information be corroborated?

*Yes. Police report.*

• Do you trust the source? Why?

*Ask the police to go on the record.*

• Is there any other way to get the story?

*FOI public records request as well.*

• Does this source have first-hand knowledge of what he or she is describing?

*Both do.*

• Can you report how the source knows the information?

*If the police report is correct, then the information should be correct.*

• Does the source benefit from your publication of the story? Who else might benefit, lose?

*Would the perpetrator be able to have recourse against the person he or she allegedly assaulted?*

• Would the source be harmed by publication or his or her name? Can your make that clear to the audience?

*Answers will vary.*

**Scenario 4**

It’s Halloween season, which according to a new study you found is one of the biggest party seasons of the year. Several students agree to talk about their experiences during this festive season — including some stories about their parents supplying the students with alcohol.

What do you do?

• Whether students feel use of anonymous sources is justified and why or why not?

*Answers will vary.*

• Whether it could depend on the situation or topics, and why or why not

*Answers will vary.*

• Whether there is any difference between their use depending on the medium involved – print, online, other; commercial or scholastic; newsmedia or other types, like magazine or yearbook

*Answers will vary.*

• How do you know when using an anonymous source is appropriate and/or justified? What ethical, legal or journalistic principles help guide your decision?

*Answers may include legal ramifications for students drinking alcohol and the parents mentioned for supplying it.*

• Does the article have credibility?

*Answers will vary. Some staffers may have first-hand knowledge of this. Some discussion may center around how to handle this students’ knowledge.*

Depending on your story situation, these questions might also be factors and need to be addressed:

• Should information be used from social media sites without verification, even if anonymously?

*Students may be able to find pictures documenting this occurrence. Should media use these tweets, pictures, updates? (Reminder, since you didn’t create the material, you don’t own it. Therefore you don’t own the copyright either.)*

Specific questions students should consider could include:

• Is the story crucial to the public?

*Answers will vary.*

• Is the information this source will provide crucial to the story?

*Answers will vary.*

• Can the information be corroborated?

*Answers will vary.*

• Is there any other way to get the story?

*Answers will vary. Maybe police reports if students and parents were arrested at a party.*

• Does this source have first-hand knowledge of what he or she is describing?

*Probably.*

• Can you report how the source knows the information?

*Answers will vary.*

• Does the source benefit from your publication of the story? Who else might benefit, lose?

*Answers will vary. Does the source have anything to gain from the story? Status?*

• Would the source be harmed by publication or his or her name? Can your make that clear to the audience?

*Obviously, this is an illegal activity. The sources would be harmed by publishing their names.*

**Scenario 5**

All seven salutatorians have come to the student news organization because they say they have proof the lone valedictorian plagiarized his last paper. They all said they will tell their story, but they don’t want to be identified in any way for fear of retribution. You’ve heard some rumors of this before, but no one has been willing to talk — until now.

What do you do as the reporter?

• Whether students feel use of anonymous sources is justified and why or why not?

*One huge concern in how the salutatorians benefit from this allegation. They could be named as valedictorians, which could result in financial gain in the form of scholarships.*

• How do you know when using an anonymous source is appropriate and/or justified? What ethical, legal or journalistic principles help guide your decision?

*Again, it’s about finding and telling the truth. What other events could help corroborate this information?*

• Does the article have credibility?

*It may. Again, it’s depending on the situation.*

Depending on your story situation, these questions might also be factors and need to be addressed:

• Should information be used from social media sites without verification, even if anonymously?

*Answers will vary.*

Specific questions students should consider could include:

• Is the story crucial to the public?

*Answers will vary.*

• Is the information this source will provide crucial to the story?

*Yes, but is it true?*

• Can the information be corroborated?

*Answers will vary.*

• Do you trust the source? Why?

*Answers will vary.*

• Is there any other way to get the story?

*Answers will vary.*

• Does this source have first-hand knowledge of what he or she is describing?

*Yes.*

• Can you report how the source knows the information?

*Probably not without identifying the source.*

• Does the source benefit from your publication of the story? Who else might benefit, lose?

*Yes, as established above.*

• Would the source be harmed by publication or his or her name? Can your make that clear to the audience?

*No, unless the allegation is spurious.*