

Wisconsin Public Media Disclosure Policy

Transparency is at the forefront of everything Wisconsin Public Radio (WPR) and Wisconsin Public Television (WPT) produces. At times, WPR/WPT's content may involve issues that are related to people with personal connections to editorial staff, or may cover institutions with organizational affiliations to WPR/WPT. For example, a reporter may have a friend or family member with a connection to a source or a story. There are also cases where WPR/WPT needs to cover an issue related to an organization with connections to Wisconsin Public Media.

One of the ways WPR/WPT ensures transparency is through the use of disclosure announcements. These are handled on a case-by-case basis. The decision to disclose information, and how, is made by the editorial staff and content managers based on guidance developed with senior management. The following gives an overview of WPR/WPT's disclosure practices.

Internal Disclosure of Conflicts

WPR/WPT employees are required to notify their manager in advance when there is a personal relationship or external activity that could affect their ability to cover a story in an unbiased manner. Examples include family members of content staff who may be directly associated with a story or other affiliations that may call their work into question.

After disclosing the conflict to a manager, a staff member may be taken off the story if the conflict raises concerns about real or perceived impartiality. WPR/WPT encourages openness and recognizes that this sometimes happens with editorial staff.

All managers should be aware of situations that require any kind of disclosure.

External Disclosure of Conflicts

In some cases, WPR/WPT cannot avoid covering issues where there may be conflicts. For example, coverage of WPR/WPT's licensee the University of Wisconsin will always be an important part of the news mix. There will also be times when WPR/WPT may have to cover stories related to business sponsors as part of its regular reporting and programming.

Determination about the nature, application and repetition of on-air disclosure is subject to sound professional judgment made by content managers at WPR/WPT, prioritizing a commitment to assuring a well-informed audience.

Because disclosure is important, WPR/WPT staff will not move announcements to avoid airing a sponsorship announcement near a story about an organization that supports WPR/WPT but will note that the subject of a story is a sponsor of its editorial content.

WPR/WPT have many different types of content. The following guidelines inform how disclosure announcements will be handled across various platforms when it is determined that a disclaimer is necessary:

- **Newscasts** – WPR/WPT editorial staff should air disclosure statements in newscasts. Because newscasts are short, time is of the essence and efforts should be taken to make these disclosure statements short and to the point. For example, while reading a story about funding to the University of Wisconsin, a newscast item would include the language, “WPR/WPT is a service of the University of Wisconsin-Madison.”
- **15-Minute Guide for Broadcast Content** – Any broadcast content that is up to 15 minutes long will include at least one disclosure announcement as part of the content. For WPR, content longer than 15 minutes will include a disclosure announcement every 15 minutes to assure listeners are aware of the potential conflict. For WPT, content longer than 15 minutes will include a disclosure announcement at the start and end of the content.
- **Digital Content** – All digital content will include appropriate disclosures using the same criteria as broadcast. This includes text, audio, video and photographic content.

Guidelines for Disclosure Announcements

The University of Wisconsin System’s reach is wide – it comprises two doctoral research universities, 11 comprehensive universities, many of which have statewide reach – as such, it is likely that it will be a regular part of WPR/WPT news coverage. Including disclosure announcements every time a source or story originates from a University of Wisconsin campus would be excessive and would compromise the value of using disclaimers.

WPR/WPT is also affiliated with the state agency the Educational Communications Board (ECB). Broadly speaking, and in most cases, disclosure announcements are not necessary when covering state government.

To help content staff decide when disclosure announcements are necessary, here are some guidelines. A disclosure message should be included in the following circumstances:

- A story that involves a business sponsor (under current contract)
- A story that involves Wisconsin Public Media as a Division or its leadership
- A story that features a WPR/WPT employee
- A story related to the ECB
- A story that involves the salaries/benefits/working conditions of WPR/WPT employees
- A budget story about the ECB
- A budget story about the University of Wisconsin
- A story about public policy that may relate to public broadcasting
- A budget story about Wisconsin Public Media

**This list is not comprehensive. As stated previously, WPR/WPT is committed to transparency – disclosure agreements will be handled (based on these guidelines) on a case-by-case basis.*

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