



The story belongs to the family

Recommendations for professionals

- 1.** Be aware that, as a professional, you bear **personal responsibility**. You should serve as a guide for the family from the beginning to the end. Your role is to protect the family, explain the context, and actively address risks and potential impacts of media coverage on them. Your responsibility ends where your ability to influence events ends.
- 2.** Before engaging with a specific family, carefully consider the **purpose of publishing** the story and ensure that it aligns with your organisation's values. Within your organisation, establish clear rules on when and how stories are made public, how families are selected, and who is responsible for approaching them. These rules should be known and understood by the entire team.
- 3.** **Prepare the family** for reality by explaining the entire process to them, including the potential impacts of sharing—both positive and negative. Ensure that the family shares the same attitude toward publishing the story. Make them aware that publishing will affect their wider environment, including siblings, grandparents, friends, neighbours, school, and teachers. Emphasize their right to stop the process completely at any time. Plan everything in advance to give the family sufficient time and space to consider their decisions carefully.
- 4.** Help the family **prepare for the interview** by providing the most critical questions and suggested answers. Agree on the authorization of texts and photographs, obtain written consent proactively, and establish clear rules for how photographs and videos will be used.
- 5.** Anticipate and **consider possible scenarios** in advance. Help the family prepare for potential public reactions—both positive and negative—such as receiving more funds than needed or, conversely, the article or report not being published.
- 6.** Ensure a **safe environment** for the interview and carefully **manage** its **timing**. Never push for publicity shortly after a diagnosis is disclosed or following a death—avoid doing so for up to one year. Recommend a neutral location for the interview or filming.
- 7.** **Guard the boundaries** of what and how information is published, especially regarding how deeply it intrudes into the family's privacy and whether that is necessary for the specific purpose. It is your role to actively draw the family's attention to sensitive information, to continuously ensure that they are in agreement, and to never persuade them to extend their boundaries if they are not comfortable doing so.
- 8.** **Attend interviews in person**, be supportive, and be ready to intervene if the situation does not develop well for the family (e.g. questions that provoke strong emotions, insensitive questioning, or pressure to respond).
- 9.** **The interests of the child and the family come first**. Do not compromise on the authorization of texts and photographs or video footage, and ensure that the context and purpose of publication are respected. Your main criterion is the safety and well-being of the family.
- 10.** **Remain with the family after their story is published**. Your work and responsibility do not end with publication. Check in with the family regularly and ask how sharing their story has impacted them. Use this experience to deal with future similar cases. If you plan to publish photographs or video footage again, always verify the family's current situation and obtain their approval for its use.