

# Media guidelines: Interviewing SWAN staff and associates



Reporting on women affected by trauma has its special challenges. In some instances the act of reporting on women veterans and servicewomen places them at risk of retribution. It can also have the ability to re-traumatize victims.

SWAN has developed these principles to assist journalists as they report on issues affecting servicewomen. They are offered as guidelines that SWAN believes will help media to cover women veterans in a sensitive manner. The guidelines are meant to support the best intentions of ethical reporters: serving the public interest without compromising the rights of the victims.

## Principles

1. The dignity and rights of every veteran are to be respected in every circumstance.
2. In interviewing and reporting on veterans, special attention is to be paid to each woman's right to privacy and confidentiality, to have their opinions heard, to participate in decisions affecting them and to be protected from harm and retribution, including the potential of harm and retribution.
3. The best interests of each veteran are to be protected over any other consideration, including over advocacy for women's issues.
4. Do not publish a story or an image which might put the veteran or her family at risk even when identities are changed, obscured or not used.
5. Do no harm to any woman veteran: avoid questions, attitudes or comments that are judgmental, insensitive to cultural values, that place a veteran in danger or expose a veteran to humiliation, or that reactivate a veteran's pain and grief from traumatic events.
6. No staging: Do not ask veterans to tell a story or take an action that is not part of their own history

## Guidelines for reporting on women veterans

1. Do not further stigmatize any veteran; avoid categorizations or descriptions that expose a veteran to negative reprisals - including additional physical or psychological harm, or to lifelong abuse, discrimination or rejection by their local communities.
2. Always provide an accurate context for the veteran's story or image.
3. Unless authorized by the victim, always change the name and obscure the visual identity of any veteran who is identified as:
  - A victim of sexual abuse or exploitation
  - A perpetrator of physical or sexual abuse
  - Charged or convicted of a crime