

## **JOINT WORK OF THE DEFENDER OF THE PUBLIC AND UNICEF**

**These are recommendations for responsibly reporting on violence against children and adolescents, as well as to abide by the suitable-for-all-ages guidelines during TV programs.**

The protection of children during suitable-for-all-ages TV and radio broadcasts (from 6am to 10pm) is an obligation stated in Article 17 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. At an international level, there is consensus regarding the need to set “protected” time slots in programming. Hence, countries have specific regulations. The Audiovisual Communication Services Law (no. 26,522) states in Article 68 this obligation for both programs and commercial breaks, and Article 107 defines the situations that imply a breach.

Journalistic reporting and news programs aired during suitable-for-all-ages timeslots must abide by the principles of protection, and the law only allows their breach under extreme circumstances.

Given these obligations, in order to promote greater respect towards the rights of children and adolescents as audiences and to collaborate with those who work every day on the news, the Defender of the Public and UNICEF recommend the following:

### **Get acquainted with what the law defines as not-suitable-for-all-ages.**

- a) “Messages that lead to substance use”;
- b) “Scenes with unjustified verbal and/or physical violence”;
- c) “Previously edited footage that emphasizes what is gruesome, morbid or sordid”;
- d) “Explicit portrayals of sexual acts that have no educational purpose. Nudity and adult language out of context”;
- e) “The constant use of foul language, with no narrative reason to support it”;
- f) “The broadcast of films whose rating by competent public offices does not match the time slots in this law”. (Article 107, Law no. 26,522).

**Analyze broadcasting images or soundbites in order to provide the audience with relevant information.**

Occasionally, the “news” is limited to the mere broadcast of images or soundbites with violence that do not provide further information on the topic or are not relevant since they make reference to events which took place long ago. In these cases, they are aired only to get higher ratings and it happens as a result of recording images with private or public surveillance cameras (usually provided by municipalities or the police) and/or recordings of assistance services (such as 911). Home-made recordings and other footage of real violence and its consequence may also have different degrees of violence.

In the case of surveillance cameras and other surveillance systems, their footage is not intended as TV material or for their broadcast in audiovisual media. That shift may result in the exhibition of inappropriate images for the public at large and for children and adolescents in particular. Even more so when editing resources are used to emphasize the most violent, morbid, gruesome elements, which also invade privacy and violate people’s dignity and right to image.

**Include warnings before a possible violation of the principles of protection.**

The inclusion of “prior, explicit warning” is allowed by law only when “there is a need to provide the audience with information” during “newsflashes, news reports or other high-impact content that may violate the principles of protection” (article 68 and decree 1,225/10). The automatic inclusion of prior warning at the beginning of news programs or newsflashes during suitable-for-all-ages time slots does not allow breaching the aim of the norm, which is to warn the audience when footage that goes against the principles of protection is going to be aired.

Bear in mind as well that current legislation states that the disclaimer read: “Warning: content not suitable for children and adolescents”. Therefore, others such as “sensitive images” or “content that may hurt sensitivities” do not abide by what is stressed in the norm. Nevertheless, they may complement it.

Moreover, it is advised to keep the disclaimer onscreen during the whole broadcast of those images, promoting a stronger fulfillment of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and thus providing the audience with more tools. Additionally, it is suggested adding comments by the newscasters in order to highlight how delicate the footage is and for it to be accessible to people with reduced eyesight who might be looking after children at that time.

### **Avoid turning violence into a show**

Reduce the editing resources and airtime that may spectacularize violence, emphasize what is gruesome or morbid (edition, music, etc.). The same is advised when reporting on traffic accidents or suicide. The resources that stand out are zooming in on violence or certain details (puddles of blood, wounds, etc.); circling or marking victims, perpetrators and witnesses in order to identify them, comments about what, when and how to watch something (when oftentimes those details do not appear in the footage), and digital reconstruction of violence.

### **Avoid the unjustified repetition of images that are violent and/or morbid**

When airing violent images as an exception, due to considering that they provide socially relevant information to the audience, it is advised to avoid their unjustified replay. It is also suggested broadcasting this footage a limited number of times and using resources that may mitigate the violence (blurring and wide shots, among others).

Repetition may cause progressive desensitization towards violence and promote its naturalization and acceptance.

### **Provide contextual information from multiple sources to avoid eliminating the content of the story or narrowing it down to an image.**

It is suggested providing a context for the story and resorting to different sources so that it does not consist only of the broadcast of high-impact images. Providing socially relevant information lets the audience place the issue in a socially, culturally specific scenario, analyze it and have information that promotes prevention and/or reporting.

When reporting on violence against children, include information on how to report the cases to the police and/or how to assist them. Avoid the repetitive broadcast of images of children fighting and adults being violent towards them.

On the other hand, violence is one of the most serious, wide-spread, invisibilized situations that affect children and adolescents. Although the State is in charge of the obligations that appear in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, all the society, including audiovisual media, is socially responsible for contributing to raising awareness and preventing violence against children and adolescents in all

fields. Furthermore, they can be key allies in the deep cultural and social tasks necessary to put an end to this problem.

The Audiovisual Communication Services Law (no. 26,522) acknowledges said Convention as a source and promotes the recognition of children and adolescents as full subjects of the rights to communication and information. Moreover, it states in article 71 the obligation of audiovisual media to abide by Law 26,061 of the integral protection of the rights of children and adolescents.

Given these obligations, the fact that they are full subjects of right and the principles of integral protection must be abided by when reporting on children and adolescents, especially when covering violent situations. Therefore, in order to promote reporting that is responsible, respectful of rights and in line with the social responsibility that this topic needs, the Defender of the Public and UNICEF wrote these [recommendations](#).