

## PROTECTING STUDENT PRIVACY

The American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges recognizes the importance of protecting students' rights to privacy. Protecting student privacy goes beyond the limitations of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act<sup>1</sup>, which protects against the unauthorized disclosure of student records; it encompasses the right to privacy as well as the protection of sensitive, personal information.

While it may not be unlawful to report legally obtained information about a student, it is an ethical violation to do so if reporting the information causes harm. The AAVMC will uphold the general journalism principle of "minimize harm"<sup>2</sup>. Under this principle, AAVMC will not use in any of its communications:

- Identifying information or certain details that are not materially related to the story
- Sensationalism to increase readership
- Information that may harm someone's reputation or memory

AAVMC's commitment to its Member Institutions and their students is to observe the highest level of ethically responsible journalism – reporting the truth while respecting the right of privacy.

<sup>1</sup> The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99)

<sup>2</sup> Society of Professional Journalists, *SPJ Code of Ethics*, <http://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp?mobile=no>

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