

University of Toronto International Centre for Disability and Rehabilitation (ICDR)
Guidelines for Ethical Photography, 2016

Rationale: Individuals who take photographs have an ethical responsibility to preserve the dignity of their subjects and provide a true and comprehensive depiction of their surroundings in order to avoid public misperceptions. Images convey an experience to the audience and therefore the photographer wields influence over public perception. These guidelines have been developed to promote the human rights and dignity of people whose images are captured, whether for personal or public use.

Informed consent is required:

- All photos that are taken, published (i.e., made public), or disseminated require the informed consent (written or verbal) of individuals who are identifiably portrayed. This ensures respect for their autonomy and privacy, and avoids harming individuals, by limiting the inappropriate publication of their image.
- Consent should include information about who will be able to view the photo once it is published and information about platforms on which the photo will be shared.
- Individuals may choose to provide consent for certain uses and not others. Consent for one purpose may not be transferred to other purposes.
- If possible, the photographer should show the photo to the individual in the picture. If published, the photographer should try to provide the individual with a method of accessing the photo.
- When taking a photo of individuals who may not be able to give informed consent (e.g., children or people with intellectual disabilities), consent should be obtained from a parent, guardian, or someone with the individual's best interest in mind. The individuals should also have the purpose of the photo explained to them in an appropriate manner, and asked for their permission.
- Regarding language barriers, consent is still required for taking and/or publishing a photo. In particular, if there is reason to believe that the individual does not understand the photographer's intention regarding publication, the photo should not be published.

Use of photos in social media requires critical reflection:

- Because social media platforms often facilitate self-promotion, the social media user has the duty to reflect on the *purpose* for publishing a photo, e.g., is the purpose of publishing the photo based on self-promotion, raising awareness, and/or other aims? The ethical photographer and social media user critically examines these motivations and strives to make ethical decisions with respect to online publication.

Further Considerations for Ethical Photography Practices

- The value of using/publishing a photo should be weighed against regard for subjects' privacy and integrity.
- Photos of individuals should illustrate autonomy and dignity of the person.
- Photos should not intend to generate sympathy or display individuals as objects of pity.
- Photos of people from one country must not be used to represent people from another country.
- Photos of public events, religious ceremonies, political demonstrations, or other cultural events should not be presented out of context.

Feedback to improve these guidelines can be sent to icdr.info@utoronto.ca.

Created by [ICDR-Students](#). Inspired by material from the following sources:

Canadian Physiotherapy Association Global Health Division, 2013. Policy on Ethical Photography.
[AusAID, 2012. AusAID Ethical Photography Guidelines.](#)