About Us

The Kentucky Center for Investigative Reporting is a nonprofit, nonpartisan newsroom founded in 2014 by Louisville Public Media, a 501(c)3 corporation that operates three public radio stations, including 89.3 WFPL News. KyCIR works with WFPL and other news partners across the region to produce and distribute original reporting in the public interest. Our journalism affects you, your neighborhood and your commonwealth.

Our mission is to protect society’s most vulnerable citizens, expose wrongdoing in the public and private sectors, increase transparency in government and hold leaders accountable, all in accordance with journalism’s highest standards.

Many newsrooms today are facing difficult choices. Some are shrinking staff and cutting back on investigative reporting, which takes significant time and resources.

At KyCIR, we believe this in-depth reporting is critical. Our journalism shines a light on major problems in our city and state, sparks conversation and spurs solutions to the commonwealth’s woes. We are members of our community. And our work is funded and supported by our community.

“KYCIR is doing vital work in keeping Kentucky politics transparent. With the demise of press journalism, we rely on you!”

— Richard Lewine and Alison Sommers, Louisville, KY
A Note From The President

The bet that Louisville Public Media made when we started KyCIR was that investigative reporting, which had been decimated by media consolidation, still had a value beyond the public good. And we proved that in 2019, when KyCIR became fully self-sustaining.

That is, our individual members and institutional supporters made KyCIR a fully sustainable business in addition to an award-winning journalism outfit.

That’s a remarkable achievement, but it’s not a surprise. KyCIR has been a relentless seeker of truth and enforcer of accountability to the systems of power in our state. Our journalists have advocated for facts and transparency through their reporting and the legal system; time and again, they’ve opened systems of government and authority to the public in ways that would not have happened without their work.

In this report, you’ll see a remarkable collection of civic journalism that reminds us why we can’t take investigative reporting for granted. Our podcast, *Dig*, forced Louisville police and health care systems to be more accountable to women reporting sexual assault. Kentucky workers are safer on the job because of changes Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear made in response to one of our investigations. And police agencies changed the way they handle asset forfeitures as a result of our journalism.

Great journalism takes resources, and I’m proud to say that in 2019, we also received financial support from more individuals than ever before. They, like LPM as a whole, have invested in a form of civic journalism that is more vital than ever.

I’m proud of the work detailed in this report. And I’m proud that, after another year of firsts, KyCIR will continue to be there for our city and our commonwealth.

Thank you to everyone who makes this work possible.

Stephen George
President, Louisville Public Media
A Note From KyCIR’s Managing Editor

When we released our new podcast, Dig, at the end of 2019, some of the most compelling audio came from an interview with top-ranking officials at the Louisville Metro Police Department.

Reporter Eleanor Kilbanoff had spent months learning everything she could about how rapes are investigated in the city, and she found some disturbing truths: police were much more likely to close a case, “prosecution declined,” than they were to arrest a person accused of rape. She brought that finding to the LMPD.

They told her that the real problem wasn’t their policing, or prosecutors. It was the media. They said stories like ours do harm, because they weaken trust in the police.

I thought this was an interesting thing to say, because below the surface of that blame-shifting, I heard something of an acknowledgement.

If we tell people how the system really works, they might question it.

That’s not something we fear at KyCIR because it’s at the core of who we are and what we do. Over and over, we’ve seen our stories reveal hard truths and seen things change. Even LMPD was motivated by our story to improve their training methods, and prosecutors took steps to make it more transparent when they decide against bringing charges.

At this writing, we are deep into 2020 — we’ve seen the news cycle change, our living rooms become our newsroom and the inner workings of LMPD leading the national news. In short, a lot is different, but our commitment to showing you how the system really works hasn’t changed a bit.

Sincerely,

Kate Howard
Managing Editor, Kentucky Center for Investigative Reporting
KyCIR Staff

Kate Howard | Managing Editor

Kate Howard became managing editor of KyCIR in July 2018. She first joined the team in 2016 as an investigative reporter.

Before KyCIR, Howard spent 12 years as a newspaper reporter, with stints at The Tennessean, The Florida Times-Union and the Omaha World-Herald.

Howard’s work has been the recipient of a national Investigative Reporters and Editors award and numerous state and regional awards.

Howard is originally from Rhode Island and graduated from Salve Regina University in Newport, R.I.

Jared Bennett | Reporter

Jared Bennett joined KyCIR as an investigative reporter in January 2020.

Before KyCIR, he spent nearly five years at the Center for Public Integrity. Jared’s reporting on business and technology has been recognized with awards from the Society of American Business Editors and Writers and the Excellence in Financial Journalism Awards, and as a finalist for the Gerald Loeb Awards.

He also worked as a digital producer at WBUR in Boston.

Jared graduated with a master’s degree in multimedia journalism from Emerson College and a bachelor’s degree in English literature from SUNY Geneseo. He was part of a team project that won a Goldsmith Award in 2020.
R.G. Dunlop | Reporter

R.G. Dunlop is an award-winning investigative reporter whose work has exposed government corruption and resulted in numerous reforms.

He worked 35 years at the Courier-Journal in a variety of positions, including Eastern Kentucky bureau chief, Legal Affairs reporter, City Editor, and State Enterprise Reporter.

He has extensively covered death penalty issues, coal-mining safety and health, criminal justice matters, and the corrupting influence of money in politics.

Dunlop is a three-time finalist for the Pulitzer Prize and a winner of a Peabody Award. He was twice a member of teams that won George Polk Awards. He graduated from Miami University and earned a master’s degree in journalism from Northwestern University.

Eleanor Klibanoff | Reporter

Eleanor Klibanoff joined the Kentucky Center for Investigative Reporting in June 2017. She previously worked at Keystone Crossroads, a public radio project covering urban decline and recovery in the Rust Belt. She was a Kroc Fellow at NPR and a recipient of a Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting grant to cover maternal healthcare in Nicaragua and El Salvador.

Originally from Atlanta, Klibanoff graduated from George Washington University in Washington, D.C., with a degree in Political Communication.

Jacob Ryan | Reporter

Jacob Ryan joined the Kentucky Center for Investigative Reporting in December 2017. For three years prior, he worked as a WFPL News reporter and covered issues including City Hall, transportation, public safety and housing.

He is a recipient of a Peabody Award, a national Investigative Reporters and Editors award, a Sidney Award from the Sidney Hillman Foundation and numerous regional and local awards.

Ryan is originally from Eddyville, Kentucky. He’s a graduate of Western Kentucky University.
“The Kentucky Center for Investigative Reporting is a small but mighty team with skilled veterans who create robust journalism with speed, efficacy, and empathy.”

— Patrick Garvin, Cambridge, MA

“We love 89.3, KyCIR, keep up the good work, good balanced journalism, world view and diverse perspectives.”

— Kanchan and Ashutosh Barve, Louisville, KY

“...we as a society are improved by the keen investigative efforts of KyCIR and the collaborative efforts of Ohio Valley Resource.”

— Christopher Harrell and Katherine Larson, Bloomington, IN
A Growing Audience

In 2019 we made a concerted effort to grow our audience through a variety of tactics. We grew the KyCIR email newsletter by 47 percent and our emails averaged an open rate of 24 percent. Our social media following grew by 22 percent, with the largest percentage growth occurring on Instagram.

Our podcasts continue to be a major audience driver for our work. The Pope’s Long Con, which debuted in December of 2017, continues to receive consistent downloads, recording 291,636 downloads in 2019 alone. The first season of Dig launched in December of 2019 and recorded 66,348 before the new year. It has been downloaded nearly 500,000 times as of December 2020.

Our reach continues to be difficult to define, thanks to content sharing and our many partnerships. In 2019 we partnered with 89.3 WFPL, Louisville Magazine, LEO Weekly, ProPublica, Reveal, and others.

More than a dozen other news outlets published our stories.

Ultimately, a growing audience has resulted in growing support for our work. We’re proud to report that KyCIR membership grew 17 percent from 2018 to 2019, reaching nearly 3,500 members. Funding raised from these members and from foundations grew by 66.5 percent in 2019.
We continue to be proud of our focus on stories where we feel we can affect change, and grateful to see the evidence that it’s working. The power of our investigations is clear through these examples of the impact of our work over the last six months:

**INFRASTRUCTURE**

An investigation last summer by KyCIR’s Caitlin McGlade revealed that eighty Kentucky dams with condition issues would threaten lives or property if they breached — but only six of those dams had complete emergency plans. In October of 2019, the city of Earlington in Hopkins County began taking steps to fix a dam highlighted in our story and develop an emergency action plan. We hope other cities will follow.

**PUBLIC HEALTH**

A 2018 KyCIR investigation that Kentucky’s OSHA agency had failed to properly investigate workplace fatalities continued to bring impact.

In 2019, in the wake of our investigation, the state promised salary raises, additional training and new equipment for inspectors.

Then, in January, newly elected Gov. Andy Beshear reinstated the Occupational Safety and Health Standards Board, which former Gov. Matt Bevin abolished in July 2018.
In December, we published “Prosecution Declined”, an investigation by Eleanor Klibanoff and the subject of our new podcast, Dig. Klibanoff found that city officials used an unusual review process for rape investigations — and it rarely brought rape convictions. This investigation prompted city officials to call a public hearing and ask the police department to answer questions about their rape investigations. The Louisville Metro Police Department also announced a new training program in response to our work.

KyCIR’s Jacob Ryan deeply reported several revelatory stories about the policies and practice of asset forfeiture. For the second year, legislators proposed bills that would require law enforcement agencies to disclose more details about cash and property seized through asset forfeiture or be subjected to financial penalties. The latest bill would also enforce a current reporting requirement that Ryan’s reporting revealed was only followed by 11% of law enforcement agencies each year.

The practice of police agencies has changed tremendously since Ryan’s reporting, too: roughly twice as many agencies are complying with current asset forfeiture reporting laws now compared with before his story published.

We hadn’t even published Ryan’s investigation into the police department’s use of public nuisance laws before public officials were admitting they’d made mistakes and promising a review. Officials acknowledged we were right that the policy was being used against victims of domestic violence, and dramatic changes made at the Louisville Codes and Regulations department were a direct result of KyCIR’s story.

And finally, Governor Beshear’s administration agreed to settle public records lawsuits filed by two state cabinets against KyCIR. The legal struggle began in November 2017, when KyCIR requested six years of sexual harassment complaints through Kentucky’s Open Records Act. Under the previous administration of Gov. Matt Bevin, the Labor and Finance and Administration cabinets sought to keep sealed the names of state employees who were accused of sexual harassment in cases where an internal investigation didn’t substantiate the allegations. The terms of the settlement will require the state to pay KyCIR about $53,000 in legal fees and release the unredacted versions of documents sought by KyCIR.
We launched season one of a new podcast, *Dig*, in December 2019. The investigation found the majority of people accused of rape in Louisville will never be arrested or prosecuted. Instead, police often clear the case “by exception,” as if it were solved, blaming prosecutors’ refusal to take the case. This practice goes against both the law and best practices for how to handle rape cases and treat victims of sexual assault.

*Dig* was featured for several weeks in Apple’s “new and noteworthy” section and we partnered with Reveal for an on-air special in December. Our local alt-weekly paper, LEO Weekly, did a follow-up story and also published guest commentary about our investigation’s findings. And the podcast appeared in several “best crime podcast” articles, including Mashable, *Women’s Health*, *Cosmopolitan*, Vulture and in the podcast *Crime Writers On*.

The “Prosecution Declined” investigation was named the winner of the Investigative Reporters and Editors (IRE) Award for small radio stations and the winner of an Edward R. Murrow regional award for News Documentary. Beyond impressive audience metrics and receiving prestigious awards...
for this work, we see our biggest success being the immediate impact of the story, and hopefully continued changes that will benefit future victims of sexual violence in Kentucky and beyond. The story prompted immediate community conversation and a demand for accountability.

In the wake of our investigation, the Metro Council’s Public Safety Committee called Lt. Shannon Lauder to answer questions raised. The Louisville Metro Police Department announced new training for patrol officers responding to victims of sexual assault and plans to change some aspects of how they close rape cases. Going forward, detectives will require prosecutors to put a decision to decline prosecution in writing to avoid miscommunication. Additionally, the case of Jen Sainato, the subject of the “Prosecution Declined” story, has been reopened.

The story has also impacted future investigations, as Eleanor Klibanoff has been reporting on the anticipated increase in domestic violence during coronavirus, and we continue to connect our constituents with resources they may need as victims of sexual assault.

This project was reported by Eleanor Klibanoff and edited by Kate Howard. Laura Ellis of WFPL was the audio producer. Alexandra Kanik produced graphics, web design and conducted data analysis. We utilized a freelance illustrator, Carrie Neumayer, for the project art. Photos for the story were taken by Louisville Public Media’s visual producer, Tyler Franklin. Legal review was conducted by Jon Fleischaker and Michael Abate of Kaplan Johnson Abate & Bird.
Awards-Winning Journalism

PEABODY AWARD
The Peabody Award recognizes the nation’s most powerful storytelling and is the highest honor in radio.

2017 Radio/Podcast – “The Pope’s Long Con”

INVESTIGATIVE REPORTERS & EDITORS
The country’s top investigative journalism association honors the best work in the nation.

2017 Investigative Radio – 1st Place – “The Pope’s Long Con”
2017 Investigative Radio – Finalist – “Louisville Police Don’t Enforce Immigration – But Help the Feds Do It”
2016 Investigative Radio – 1st Place – “The University Of Louisville, A Big Donor And Ownership Of An Abandoned Factory”
2015 Investigative Radio – 1st Place – “Only In Kentucky: Jailers Without Jails”

ASSOCIATION OF HEALTH CARE JOURNALISTS
The AHCJ awards recognize the best health reporting nationwide in print, broadcast and online media.

2018 Consumer Health (large outlets, 1st place) – “Fatal Flaws: How Kentucky Is Failing Its Workers,” by KyCIR, the Ohio Valley ReSource and the Center for Public Integrity
EDWARD R. MURROW AWARD

The Radio Television Digital News Association honors outstanding achievements in electronic journalism.

2020 Regional Award: “For Louisville Offenders And Victims Alike, A New Label: ‘Public Nuisance’”
2020 Regional Award: “Prosecution Declined”
2019 Regional Award — Overall Excellence
2019 Regional Award – “Fatal Flaws: How Kentucky Is Failing Its Workers”
2018 Regional Award – “Louisville Police Don’t Enforce Immigration — But Help The Feds Do It”
2017 Regional Award – “The University Of Louisville, A Big Donor And Ownership Of An Abandoned Factory”
2016 Regional Award – “Only In Kentucky: Jailers Without Jails”
2014 National Award – “The Man With Many Chances”
2014 Regional Award – “The Man With Many Chances”

EXCELLENCE IN FINANCIAL JOURNALISM AWARDS

Excellence in Financial Journalism Awards, sponsored by the New York State Society of CPAs, honor the best in business news journalism from across the nation.

2019 Best Audio, Small Media - “Fatal Flaws: How Kentucky Is Failing Its Workers”

SIDNEY AWARD

The Sidney Hillman Foundation’s national award honors the best “journalism in the service of the common good.”

January 2015 – “Only in Kentucky: Jailers Without Jails”

SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTS - METRO LOUISVILLE

Twenty first place awards since 2015.
GREEN EYESHADE

The Society of Professional Journalists’ annual Green Eyeshade Awards honor the best online, radio, print and television journalism in the southeastern United States.

2019 Investigative Reporting (Radio) – 1st Place – “A Louisville Family Reported Sexual Abuse By A Coach. He Worked With Kids For 15 More Years”

2018 Investigative Reporting (Radio) – 1st Place – “Louisville Police Don’t Enforce Immigration – But Help the Feds Do It”

2017 Investigative Reporting (Radio) – 1st Place – “U of L Investigation”

2017 Investigative Reporting (Radio) – 2nd Place – “Kentucky Constables”

2016 Best In Radio – “Trouble Behind Bars”

2016 Investigative Reporting (Radio) – 1st Place – “Only In Kentucky: Jailers Without Jails”

2016 Investigative Reporting (Online) – 2nd Place – “Kicked Out Of The Commonwealth”

2016 Public Service In Radio – 1st Place – “Trouble Behind Bars”

2015 Investigative Reporting (Online) – 1st Place – “The Congressman, His Wife and the Lobbyist”

2015 Investigative Reporting (Radio) – 2nd Place – “Troubled Tiger Exhibit Puts Public’s Safety At Risk”

KENTUCKY ASSOCIATED PRESS BROADCASTERS

2019 Investigative Reporting – “Conviction or Not, Seized Cash is ‘Cost of Doing Business’ in Louisville”

2019 Investigative Reporting Finalist – “Lacking Sexual Assault Nurses, Some Kentucky Hospitals Illegally Turn Victims Away”

2018 Investigative Reporting – “Despite Calls For Help, Bedbugs Infest Louisville Public Housing Complex”


2017 Investigative Reporting – “Louisville Police Don’t Enforce Immigration – But Help the Feds Do It”


2016 Investigative Reporting – “U of L Foundation Bought an Empty Factory in Oklahoma —Because a Donor Asked”

2016 Investigative Reporting Finalist – “Kentucky Constables: Untrained and Unaccountable”

2015 Best Long Enterprise Reporting – “Police in Kentucky Town Ship Mentally Ill Man to Florida, Defying Judge’s Order”; “Only in Kentucky: Jailers Without Jails”

2015 Best Special/Documentary – “Trouble Behind Bars”
“The KyCIR is the best and most reliable local source of news reporting. Thank you.”
— Jessica and Sheryl
KyCIR Advisory Council

The Advisory Council serves to provide ongoing feedback on the work produced by the Kentucky Center for Investigative Reporting. The purpose of the council is to represent the diverse interests of the public in regular meetings with KyCIR, and to serve as ambassadors in the community.

The Advisory Council meets quarterly and reviews the program goals and significant decisions of KyCIR, and advises management on whether the newsroom is meeting the needs of the communities it serves. The role of the council is solely advisory in nature.

MEMBERS:

Molly Bingham

Molly Bingham is the president and CEO of Orb Media.

An award-winning documentary filmmaker, photographer and journalist, her work has been featured in *The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Guardian, Rolling Stone, The Independent* and *Vanity Fair*. Molly serves on the boards of The Overseas Press Club and The Listen Campaign. A graduate of Harvard University, Bingham was awarded a Nieman Fellowship in 2004, where she first began developing Orb’s core concepts.

Bennie L. Ivory

Bennie Ivory retired as editor of the Louisville *Courier Journal* in 2013 after 16 years at the helm of Louisville’s daily newspaper and more than 40 years in journalism.

Ivory started his career as a reporter at *The Sentinel-Record* in Hot Springs, Arkansas, and served as an executive editor at *Florida Today* and *The News-Journal* in Wilmington, Delaware, before coming to Louisville. The * Courier Journal* was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize twice under his tenure. Ivory has served as a Pulitzer Prize juror four times.
Stanley Macdonald

Stan Macdonald worked for more than 30 years at the Courier Journal, where he served as a reporter, city editor, and special projects editor.

Macdonald was directly involved in several stories that won national awards, including the George Polk award and the runner-up for the Pulitzer Prize. After retiring from the newspaper, Macdonald taught writing and journalism courses at Western Kentucky University, St. Lawrence University and Bellarmine University.

Caroline Pieroni

Caroline Pieroni, a former journalist, is an attorney with Dinsmore & Shohl.

Her practice is focused on employment litigation and advice, business litigation and First Amendment and media law. Before she became a lawyer, Pieroni worked as a newspaper reporter at the Courier Journal. She is a graduate of Western Kentucky University and the Brandeis School of Law at the University of Louisville.

Stacie Shain

Stacie Shain is an award-winning communications professional who teaches at Bellarmine University and for Penn State University’s World Campus.

Shain earned her bachelor’s degree from Bellarmine University and her master’s degree from Indiana University. Shain co-authored a book, “Duty, Honor, Applause: America’s Entertainers in World War II.” Shain is on the board of the Louisville Pro Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists.
We aim to have a diverse set of financial backers and supporters, including community members, philanthropists and local and national foundations.

Donors have no control over our newsroom, our work or our editorial decisions. We do not accept money from political parties, political action committees, politicians or others whose donation may directly affect our independence or public perception of our operations.

Two substantial grants to LPM, earmarked for an investigative newsroom, helped establish KyCIR in mid-2013. Local businessman Ed Hart donated $250,000 and the Louisville-based C.E. & S. Foundation provided a grant of $190,000.

In 2015, the C.E. & S. Foundation pledged an additional $600,000. It is KyCIR’s largest donor.

KyCIR discloses all annual donations of any amount. We raised more money from more individuals than ever before in 2019.

"I am hugely appreciative of the journalistic work of KyCIR and always look forward to hearing their work shared on the air."

— Rita Ernst, Louisville, KY

Thank you to our 2019 KyCIR Supporters

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