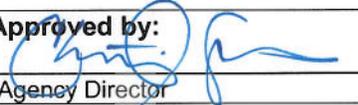
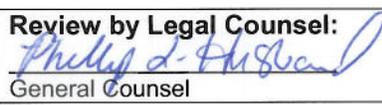




District of Columbia Department of Health <b>Communications Management – Media and Public Relations Requests</b>		<b>PROCEDURE 620.10</b> <b>Implementing Office:</b> Office of the Director <b>Training Required:</b> No <b>Originally Issued:</b> 4/24/14 <b>Revised/Reviewed:</b>
<b>Approved by:</b>  Agency Director	<b>Review by Legal Counsel:</b>  General Counsel	<b>Effective Date:</b> <b>Valid Through Date:</b>

<b>I. Authority</b>	Reorganization Plan No. 4 of 1996; Mayor’s Order 1997-42
<b>II. Reason for the Policy</b>	The purpose of this written policy is to provide specific procedures for managing all DOH media and public relations requests and establish standards for the dissemination of public information.
<b>III. Applicability</b>	This policy applies to all DOH employees, contracted staff, volunteers, interns, and summer youth employees.
<b>IV. Policy Statement</b>	The DOH Office of Communications and Community Relations (OCCR) is charged with handling all DOH public affairs requests and establishing standards for the public dissemination of verbal and written information. Any employee who violates this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.
<b>V. Definitions</b>	<p>Media - Any external print, radio, television, or online news publication or agency seeking to solicit information from DOH employees or the agency itself. Media is often used interchangeably with the term “press.”</p> <p>Reporter - A person who gathers and recounts information, as for a newspaper, wire service, or television station. The term “reporter” may include, but is not limited to, the following media points of contact: print reporter, television reporter, radio reporter, online reporter, blogger, freelance writer, journalism student, and intern.</p>
<b>VI. Contents</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Role and Responsibilities of the OCCR</li> <li>2. Representing DOH in the Media</li> <li>3. Procedures when OCCR is Contacted By the Media</li> <li>4. Procedures When DOH Staff are Contacted by the Media</li> <li>5. Consent to Interview, Photograph, or Film</li> </ol>

<p><b>VII. Procedures</b></p>	<p>1. Role and Responsibilities of the OCCR</p> <p>a) Role of OCCR</p> <p>The DOH Office of Communications and Community Relations (OCCR) is charged with handling all DOH media requests, as well as establishing standards for the public dissemination of verbal and written information. A well-coordinated and effective public information system is an important and integral part of the DC Department of Health (DOH). OCCR, in collaboration with the various Administrations, provides timely and accurate information on the Department’s mission and core functions to meet and maintain the health needs of the community.</p> <p>OCCR must be notified immediately of any potentially newsworthy incident that occurs in DOH, or within DOH funded or regulated programs, whether good or bad. Examples of newsworthy events include, but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notice of grant awards</li> <li>• Launch of a new campaign or initiative</li> <li>• Rabid animals</li> <li>• Problems or complaints regarding a grantee’s service delivery</li> <li>• Disease outbreaks</li> <li>• Entering and signing memorandums of understanding</li> <li>• Event sponsorships</li> <li>• Public information/awareness activities and campaigns</li> </ul> <p>b) Responsibility of OCCR</p> <p>The Director of Communications (DOC) is the primary representative of the Office of Communications and Community Relations. The DOC:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develops and maintains media relations</li> <li>• Creates public health messages</li> <li>• Manages communications activities throughout the agency</li> </ul> <p>The DOC may delegate certain duties for the purpose of ensuring that DOH achieves its core mission.</p> <p>2. Representing DOH in the Media</p> <p>a) Only DOH officials designated by the Director or the DOC shall respond to inquiries from the media and/or represent DOH in the media. Senior Deputy Directors</p>
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	<p>designated to speak to the media may ONLY do so when the DOC or a member of OCCR is present.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>b) DOH employees shall coordinate all media inquiries and interviews through OCCR.</li> <li>c) If a reporter contacts an employee without prior clearance by OCCR, the employee shall direct the reporter to OCCR and wait for written approval from OCCR before answering ANY questions.</li> <li>d) If you have not been contacted by the Director or OCCR, you are not permitted to speak on behalf of the Department of Health.</li> <li>e) DOH employees, as private citizens, may respond to the media after duty hours. However, it must be made clear to the interviewer that the opinions expressed are those of the employee and do not represent official DOH views. Communication with the media should be done on the employee’s personal time, not during official duty hours.</li> </ul> <p>3. Procedures when OCCR is Contacted by the Media</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Upon receipt of a media request, OCCR will contact the respective Senior Deputy Director, Program Manager, or subject matter expert to coordinate a response. OCCR will develop an internal timeline for timely response.</li> <li>b) <b>OCCR receives inquiries from the media almost every day of the work week and sometimes on weekends. Most reporters will need requested information by the end of the day. <i>If you are contacted by OCCR to assist with a media inquiry, a timely response must be provided by 5:30 pm on the same day in which the request was communicated or transmitted, unless OCCR establishes a different timeline. If an employee fails to timely respond to a request from OCCR, the incident may be referred to the employee’s direct supervisor and/or Senior Deputy Director.</i></b></li> <li>c) OCCR will provide guidance in formulating written responses, interview preparation, and other guidance to respond to a media inquiry as needed. If a written response is requested, OCCR will review the draft for content, accuracy, and compliance and will collaborate with the Senior Deputy Director, Program Manager, or subject matter expert to request necessary revisions.</li> <li>d) If necessary, OCCR will forward the completed response with comments and/or recommendations to the Director for further review and approval. OCCR will facilitate</li> </ul>
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- revisions at the Director’s discretion.
- e) OCCR will transmit the final, approved document or deliverable to the media point of contact with appropriate internal and external copies on the transmittal.
- f) Some deliverables require approval from the Executive Office of the Mayor. OCCR will obtain these approvals as necessary.

4. Procedures when DOH Staff are Contacted by the Media

Most print, television, and radio reporters, freelance writers, bloggers, journalism students, and interns contact OCCR directly for media inquiries. In some cases, these entities may contact DOH staff directly. Employees shall not comment, speak to, email, or provide background information to the media without coordinating with OCCR and receiving written approval. DOH employees must follow the procedures outlined below for handling such calls or emails:

- a) When contacted directly by the media, DOH staff shall apprise the requestor that inquiries and requests for information are managed by the DOH Office of Communications and Community Relations and request that the entity contact the OCCR by telephone or email. The following information must be included in the email:
  - i. Name and affiliation of caller;
  - ii. Purpose of the call, including specific information requested;
  - iii. Required timeline; and
  - iv. Relevant contextual information (any event that may have triggered the call, potential impact, etc., if this information is known).

b) DOH staff shall notify the OCCR of the media inquiry via email on the same day that the request was made and provide as much information as possible regarding the name and affiliation of the requestor, the purpose of the call, and relevant contextual information. The purpose of this notification is to ensure that OCCR is apprised of potentially newsworthy information and events, regardless of whether the requestor ultimately follows with a formal media request. The employee shall copy their direct supervisor and Senior Deputy Director when transmitting the notice of media inquiry to OCCR.

c) Upon receipt of a formal media request, OCCR will follow up with the media point of contact to clarify the request.

	<p>OCCR may subsequently contact the respective Senior Deputy Director, Program Manager, or subject matter expert to coordinate a response. OCCR will develop an internal timeline for timely response.</p> <p>5. Consent to Interview, Photograph, or Film</p> <p>a) All requests to photograph or film DOH facilities and to interview clients, patients, or program participants must be submitted to OCCR for review and written approval. OCCR has the responsibility to ensure compliance with confidentiality statutes and other relevant policies and procedures. Taking an image of a client, patient, or program participant in any form may only be done WITH THE EXPRESS WRITTEN PERMISSION of the client or authorized representative (i.e., parent or legal guardian) on an approved release of information form available from OCCR. OCCR shall ensure that these activities take place with minimal disruption to the ongoing business of the program.</p>
<p><b>VIII. Contacts</b></p>	<p>Director of the Office of Communications and Community Relations- 202-724-7481</p>
<p><b>IX. Related Documents, Forms and Tools</b></p>	<p>None.</p>