



Public Information & Media Relations

Section: 2.450
Effective Date: March 30, 2011
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2.450 Public Information & Media Relations

2.450.02 PIO Function Established

- A. The *Office of Government and Community Relations* provides media related services and cooperates fully and impartially with those needing help with a story, faculty, expertise and additional information about the university. The Public Information Officer (PIO), and manager of public information is reached at 410-837- 5739.
- B. PIO duties and responsibilities include, but are not limited to:
1. Assisting media personnel in covering stories at the scenes of incidents;
 2. Being available for responses to the news media;
 3. Preparing or promoting image-building features about the agency and its employees;
 4. Preparing and distributing agency public information releases;
 5. Arranging for, and assisting at, news conferences;
 6. Coordinating and authorizing the release of information to the media about victims, witnesses, and suspects;
 7. Channeling or coordinating media requests for information between requesters and agency personnel;
 8. Discussing and interpreting agency policies or directives for the media and community;
 9. Assisting the Chief in the management of information during crisis situations;
 10. Coordinating and authorizing the release of information to the media concerning confidential agency investigations and operations;
 11. Developing procedures for releasing information when other public service agencies are involved in a mutual effort; and
 12. As specifically authorized, providing official comments on internal affairs or other sensitive matters
- C. The agency's public information and media relations activities are guided by laws and regulations that include, but are not limited to:
1. Access to Public Records, SG 10-611 *et seq.*;
 2. Criminal Justice Information System, CP 10-201, *ET. SEQ.*;
 3. Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) - Buckley Amendment, 20 USC 1232g;
 4. Juvenile Court Records, MD Rule 11-121;
 5. Confidentiality of Records, CJ 3-828;

6. Confidentiality of Medical Records, HG 4-301, et. seq.;
7. USMH III-6.30 Policy on Confidentiality and Disclosure of Student Records
8. Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act of 1990 (Clery Act) as amended; and

2.450.04 PIO Availability & Notification

- A. Barring exigent circumstances, the PIO is usually available 0830 - 1630 hours, Monday through Friday, excepting holidays and times the university is closed.
 1. The PIO can be contacted by the on duty Police Communications Operator (PCO) 24 hours a day.
 - a. The PIOs, when not immediately available in the office, should respond as quickly as possible to agency requests.
 2. The Police Communications Center (PCC) is the primary contact point for matters involving news media inquiries of the agency during PIO off-duty hours and hours PIO is on-duty, but not immediately available.
 - a. The “voice mail greeting” messages of the PIO will inform callers to leave a message or contact his cell phone.
- B. Shift supervisors/OIC’s are responsible for ensuring the PIO is notified:
 1. When major incidents or unusual events generate media interest; or
 2. When mass media representatives arrive at scenes of incidents.
- C. Notifications made to the PIO of incidents are not necessarily requests for the PIO to respond to incidents.
 1. The PIO will normally notify the PCC or agency employees making notifications as to whether they will respond.
 2. The PIO may assist shift supervisors/OIC’s, Captain, Lieutenant, or the Chief in preparing or coordinating preliminary public information releases prior to, or in lieu of, a response by the PIO.

2.450.06 PIO Role of Ranking Officers

- A. Shift supervisors/OIC’s will ensure that official preliminary accounts of incidents are provided the PIO as soon as possible in order for that office to address media representatives responding to incident scenes or making inquiries into incidents.
- B. Preliminary public information releases may be made by a shift supervisor/OIC , Captain or Lieutenant but **only** on authorization by the Chief or the PIO, in order to:
 1. Avert unconfirmed, undocumented news accounts from unofficial sources that may have detrimental effects on the agency, its efforts, or persons involved in incidents;
 2. Satisfy early or immediate needs of the media; and
 3. Allow time for more complete information to be compiled and subsequently released.
- C. Information disseminated in preliminary public information releases will not only be consistent with this directive, but also restricted to general information relating to the who, what, where, when, how and/or actions taken regarding incidents.

2.450.08 Limitations on Agency Employees

- A. Agency employees will only discuss incidents with media representatives, prepare releases, or otherwise provide information to the media, in compliance with this directive and will keep the PIO informed of all such contacts or informational releases.
- B. Agency employees are prohibited from making statements or releasing further information to the media when existing media releases specifically state that the agency will not release any further information or when other limitations have been imposed, unless specifically authorized to do so by the Chief or the PIO.
- C. Nothing in agency directives precludes or diminishes employees' rights of free speech unless their statements:
 - 1. Materially and substantially affects the performance of employees' duties;
 - 2. Affects the discipline, harmony, or general efficiency and effectiveness of the agency;
 - 3. Are not of compelling public interest; or
 - 4. Are specifically prohibited by directives, laws, or regulations.

2.450.10 Release of Medical Record Information

- A. Only specified, incident related medical record information can be released by agency officers consistent with HG 4-301 et. seq.
- B. Medical record information that can be released to non-health care providers includes, but is not limited to:
 - 1. All pertinent information to the parents, guardians, or legal custodians of minor children;
 - 2. Directory information concerning patients' presence and general health condition, excepting that information primarily developed in connection with mental health services;
 - 3. Circumstances of causality, excepting mental health services related, described in general terms such as "trauma", "illness", "injury", etc.;
 - 4. General health condition, which is the general health status of patients described in general terms such as "critical", "poor", "fair", "good", "excellent", etc.; and
 - 5. Any relevant information in emergency situations where there are clear and significant risks of death or imminent serious injuries or harm to patients.

2.450.12 Preparation of Public Information Releases

- A. The PIO is responsible for preparing and distributing public information releases. Public information releases will be prepared for, but not limited to:
 - 1. Incidents that may attract significant media attention;
 - 2. Criminal or other police incidents involving deaths, serious injuries, or extensive losses or destruction of property;
 - 3. Incidents needing assistance from the public;
 - 4. Incidents mandated to be released consistent with the federal Clery Act, as amended;
 - 5. Serious situations, conditions, or incidents affecting the safety or security of the community and not under the jurisdiction of another agency;

6. Incidents of human interest that illustrate agency employees fulfilling social needs or performing heroic or humanitarian services; and
 7. Disasters, natural or otherwise, involving extensive agency involvement, unless joint operation public information releases are prepared.
- B. Public information releases will be distributed by the PIO via:
1. The agency's web site;
 2. E-mail systems; or
 3. Other appropriate venues as determined by the Chief or the PIO.
- C. Information contained in public information releases may be viewed, duplicated, faxed, e-mailed, and/or read verbatim to anyone upon request.
1. Requests to access public information releases will be referred to the agency's web site or the PIO.
 2. Any additional information, clarification, or questions from the media, in reference to public information releases or specific incidents **must be** referred to the PIO.

2.450.14 Releasable Information

- A. Unless otherwise precluded, releasable arrest related information is:
1. The name, sex, age, description, and marital status of arrested adults or juveniles charged as adults;
 2. The fact juvenile arrests were made, including sex, age, general area of residence, and substance of charges;
 3. Substance or text of charges as contained in warrants or other charging documents;
 4. Identities of arresting officers, excepting identities of undercover officers;
 5. Chronological arrest logs; and
 6. Circumstances immediately surrounding arrests, including:
 - a. Time and place of arrests;
 - b. If pursuits occurred;
 - c. Resistance, and if any injuries were sustained as a direct result;
 - d. Possession and/or use of weapons;
 - e. Description of items or contraband seized; and
 - f. Arrest disposition.
- B. Releasable investigative related information is:
1. Types and nature of incidents;
 2. Locations, dates, and times, of incidents;
 3. If injuries were sustained by parties involved;
 4. The amounts and types of property taken, including its value, if known, rounded to the nearest hundred dollars, unless precluded by investigative protocols;
 5. The race of individuals involved when this descriptive information advances the conduct of investigations, or is germane to the incident;
 6. The number of officers or other persons involved in incidents and length of investigations;
 7. The names of officers investigating incidents, their supervisors as appropriate, and units to which they are assigned, excepting undercover officers;
 8. Requests for aid in locating evidence, suspects, or complainants;

9. The existence, but not contents of, suicide notes; or
10. If suspects deny their charges, but not the substance of their denials or alibis.

2.450.16 Non-Releasable Information

- A. After incidents, but before arrests are made or during investigations, information will not be released regarding:
 1. Identities or locations of any suspects, excepting that the existence of suspects may be acknowledged without comment; and
 2. Results of any investigative or forensic procedures, such as CDS field tests, Blood Alcohol tests, field sobriety tests, lineups, polygraphs, fingerprinting, laboratory analyses, and ballistics examinations. Facts that tests are being performed may be acknowledged without further comment.
- B. Information will not be released which, if prematurely disclosed, may significantly interfere with investigations or apprehensions.
- C. Information will not be released regarding:
 1. Prior criminal records, character, or reputation of defendants;
 2. Employment or college/university student status, unless germane to the case;
 3. Existence, or contents, of confessions, admissions, or statements of defendants, or their failure or refusal to make such;
 4. Results of any tests, or defendants' refusal or failure to submit to tests;
 5. Identity, credibility, character, statement or expected testimony of any witnesses, or prospective witnesses;
 6. Statements, prospective testimony, character, or credibility of any victims;
 7. Opinions about the guilt or innocence of defendants, or concerning the merits of the case;
 8. Possibility of guilty pleas, plea bargaining or other dispositions;
 9. Reports, transcripts or summaries of proceedings from which the media and public have been excluded by judicial order;
 10. Photographs of suspects, unless in the public's interest;
 11. Names of juvenile suspects, unless charged as adults;
 12. **Names and addresses of victims of sexual assaults or victims of child molestations or related information which, if divulged would tend to lead to the victims' identification;**
 13. **Names of witnesses or victims or their addresses, unless the release of such information will assist the agency in locating missing persons;**
 14. Specific causes of death;
 15. Investigative information or other evidentiary information regarding criminal cases;
 16. Contents of suicide notes;
 17. Personal opinions not founded in fact;
 18. Unofficial statements concerning personnel or internal affairs matters;
 19. Home addresses or telephone numbers of agency employees;
 20. Identities of any critically injured or deceased persons prior to notifications of next of kin, except after all reasonable efforts to notify families have been exhausted; or

21. Information received from other law enforcement or public safety agencies without their concurrence in releasing that information.

2.450.18 Daily Crime Log

- A. The Office of the Chief is responsible for ensuring that the Daily Crime Log is updated and maintained by the agency for public inspection.
 - 1. The agency's Daily Crime Log is posted to the agency's web site and accessible to the general public 24 hours a day, seven day a week.
 - 3. Anyone may generate or distribute printed copies of logs as needed.
 - 4. Questions regarding the log and/or inquiries about specific information contained therein will be directed to the Office of the Chief.
- B. The Daily Crime Log contains a listing of incident reports initiated by the agency. The list is generally in sequential order according to when the incidents were brought to the attention of the agency.
 - 1. Incidents in the Log are classified consistent with the U.S. Department of Justice, FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting Handbook (UCR), the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act, and do not necessarily correspond with crimes according to the Annotated Code of Maryland. Therefore, crimes classified according to the Annotated Code of Maryland may be classified differently according to UCR criteria.
 - 2. In cases where multiple offenses occurred during single incidents, the most serious offense, as classified by the UCR, is utilized for classification purposes.
 - 3. Log entries are posted and updated within two business days of incidents or updates coming to the agency's attention.
 - 4. Logs provide general location of incidents.

2.450.20 Internal Affairs Matters

- A. The agency and its employees are prohibited by law from releasing information to the media and the public relating to internal investigations and personnel matters unless involved employees waive their confidentiality privileges.
- B. Agency employees may request waivers of their confidentiality privileges through direct correspondence or e-mail to the Chief.
- C. Employees who release information to the media or the public about their internal affairs or personnel matters will be deemed by the agency to have waived their confidentiality privileges.
- D. Employees who elect to have trial boards or other personnel hearing matters open, or who appeal decisions to the Circuit Court will be deemed by the agency to have waived their confidentiality privileges.
- E. The agency may comment to the media in those cases where confidentiality privileges have been waived. In these instances, the agency's comments will be made only with the express consent of the Chief.

2.450.22 Press/Media Credentials

- A. The agency does not issue credentials to members of the media, but does recognize valid identifications or credentials from all local, national, and international news organizations.
- B. Freelance writers, photographers, or other media representatives lacking valid press or media identification or credentials will be treated as members of the general public.
- C. Questions pertaining to press/media identification or credentials will be referred to PIO.

2.450.24 Telephone or Walk-In Inquiries

Agency employees are authorized to release to media representatives and the general public information contained in the agency's public information releases or agency's web site. Information contained in public information releases may be viewed, duplicated, faxed, emailed and/or read verbatim to anyone upon request. Other information will be released consistent with this directive.

2.450.26 Impartiality

Public information will be released to media representatives without partiality. Information will not be withheld, delayed, or selectively released to favor any particular news media representative or agency. Specific inquiries made independently by media representatives may be honored when inquiries are made.

2.450.28 Access to Agency Employees

Bona fide representatives of the news media will be granted reasonable access to agency employees, but news gathering efforts will not be permitted to interfere with agency operations or administration.

2.450.30 Withholding Information

Denials to release information will be adequately and courteously explained in order to avoid adversely affecting relations between the agency and the media or the public.

2.450.32 Disinformation

The agency and its employees will not purposely supply misinformation or disinformation to the media or the public.

2.450.34 Media Access to Incident Scenes & Police Activities

- A. Agency employees will allow bona fide members of the media, their vehicles and equipment, closer access to incidents than that granted the general public and to conduct news gathering activities so long as it is reasonable and practical and their activities do not interfere with police operations, public safety, or traffic flow.
- B. Supervisors at major police incidents, hostage or barricade incidents, and civil disturbances will, as necessary and appropriate, ensure:
 - 1. Perimeters are designated and established;
 - 2. Media staging areas are designated and established nearby command posts or at centralized positions;

3. Perimeter personnel are informed where to send media representatives and any limits on media activities; and
 4. Determine preliminary facts of cases or incidents and ensure media representatives are up dated with the information.
- C. The PIO is responsible for:
1. Ensuring their activities are coordinated with on site supervisors;
 2. Conducting regular media up dates or briefings and making timely announcements of major developments; and
 3. Assisting with rumor control by providing correct information to dispel rumors.
- D. Direct access by media personnel to police incident scenes may be allowed only after all known evidence has been processed and on-site investigations have been completed. Criminal investigations will have priority over news media coverage.
- E. Agency employees will not take any actions against media representatives to prevent or impede the lawful right to photograph, telecast, etc., persons at incident scenes or in public places.
1. Agency employees may take protective or humanistic actions to cover or screen bodies or other inflammatory scenes if such actions are deemed necessary by a supervisor.
 2. Suspects or accused persons in custody will not be deliberately posed for photographs, telecasts, etc.
 3. Media representatives will not be permitted to interview persons in custody.
 4. Agency employees will not pose themselves with suspects or accused persons, or enter into agreements to have suspects or accused persons in custody at prearranged times or places to facilitate photographs, telecasts, etc.
 5. The agency may arrange media coverage of significant seizures or other evidentiary items when:
 - a. The coverage is conducted under controlled circumstances; and
 - b. The coverage will not prejudice subsequent prosecutions.
 6. Photographs, mug shots, etc., may be released by the agency to help locate persons charged with criminal offenses or being sought in connection with investigations.
- F. Media access to, and movement within, fire, rescue, EMS, disaster or other similar scenes, is under the control and jurisdiction of fire officers in charge.
1. Police incident commanders will confer with fire officers in charge of scenes to assist in facilitating media coverage or access.
 2. Agency employees will not allow media representatives' access to scenes until permission is granted by fire officers in charge.
- G. Other agency directives relating to media coverage of disasters, civil disturbances, and hostage / barricade situations are contained in the agency's Unusual Occurrences Manual.

2.450.36 Multi-Agency Efforts

- A. The university's PIO will coordinate media inquiries and releases with the PIO of other agencies whenever this agency and other public service agencies are involved in mutual efforts.

- B. The university's PIO will participate in cooperative efforts with The PIO from agencies involved in mutual efforts to determine the lead agency for media relations and what, if any, information will be included in this agency's public information releases pertaining to other agencies involved.

2.450.38 Involvement of the Media in Related Directive Development

- A. The PIO will maintain a list of media points of contact.
- B. The PIO will provide copies of directives relating to public information and media relations to media points of contact and other media representatives upon request.
- C. Proposed changes to public information and media relations directives will be distributed for comments by the PIO to media points of contact and other media representatives upon request.
 - 1. Proposed changes will be distributed for comment in order for written comments to be returned to the agency.
 - 2. Comments returned by media points of contact will be considered when staffing changes to public information and media relations.