



POLICY STATEMENT
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania • Department of Corrections

Policy Subject: Media Relations		Policy Number: DC-ADM 009
Date of Issue: August 2, 2021	Authority: Signature on File John E. Wetzel	Effective Date: August 9, 2021

I. AUTHORITY

The Authority of the Secretary of Corrections to direct the operation of the Department of Corrections is established by Sections 201, 206, 506, and 901-B of the Administrative Code of 1929, 71 P.S. §§61, 66, 186, and 310-1, Act of April 9, 1929, P.L. 177, No. 175, as amended.

II. APPLICABILITY

This policy is applicable to all facilities operated under the jurisdiction of, or conducting business with the Department of Corrections.

III. POLICY

It is the policy of the Department to establish procedures for informing the public and the news media of events within the Department's areas of responsibility. The Department shall ensure that an area is identified in each facility that is accessible to news media representatives and that a contact person is designated for routine requests for information at each facility.¹

IV. PROCEDURES

All applicable procedures are contained in the procedures manual that accompanies this policy document.

¹ 5-ACI-1A-22, 4-ACRS-7F-01

V. SUSPENSION DURING AN EMERGENCY

In an emergency or extended disruption of normal facility operation, the Secretary/designee may suspend any provision or section of this policy for a specific period.

VI. RIGHTS UNDER THIS POLICY

This policy does not create rights in any person nor should it be interpreted or applied in such a manner as to abridge the rights of any individual. This policy should be interpreted to have sufficient flexibility to be consistent with law and to permit the accomplishment of the purpose(s) of the policies of the Department of Corrections.

VII. RELEASE OF INFORMATION AND DISSEMINATION OF POLICY

A. Release of Information

1. Policy

This policy document is public information and may be released upon request.

2. Confidential Procedures (if applicable)

Confidential procedures for this document, if any, are not public information and may not be released in its entirety or in part, without the approval of the Secretary of Corrections/designee. Confidential procedures may be released to any Department of Corrections employee on an as needed basis.

B. Distribution of Policy

1. General Distribution

The Department of Corrections policy and procedures shall be distributed to the members of the Central Office Executive Staff, all Facility Managers, and Community Corrections Regional Directors on a routine basis. Distribution of confidential procedures to other individuals and/or agencies is subject to the approval of the Secretary of Corrections/designee.

2. Distribution to Staff

It is the responsibility of those individuals receiving policies and procedures, as indicated in the "General Distribution" section above, to ensure that each employee expected or required to perform the necessary procedures/duties is issued a copy of the policy and procedures either in hard copy or via email, whichever is most appropriate.

VIII. SUPERSEDED POLICY AND CROSS REFERENCE

A. Superseded Policy

1. Department Policy

- a. **DC-ADM 009, “News Media Relations Procedures Manual,”** issued July 25, 2013, by Secretary John E. Wetzel.
- b. **Bulletin 01 to DC-ADM 009, “New Media Relations Procedures Manual,”** issued March 21, 2019, by Secretary John E. Wetzel.

2. Facility Policy and Procedures

This document supersedes all facility policy and procedures on this subject.

B. Cross Reference(s)

1. Administrative Manuals

- a. DC-ADM 003, Release of Information
- b. DC-ADM 812, Inmate Visiting Privileges
- c. DC-ADM 818, Automated Inmate Telephone System

2. ACA Standards

- a. Adult Correctional Institutions: 5-ACI-1A-22, 5-ACI-3D-06
- b. Adult Community Residential Services: 4-ACRS-7F-01, 4-ACRS-7F-02, 4-ACRS-7F-03
- c. Adult Probation and Parole Field Services: 4-APPFS-1C-01
- d. Correctional Training Academies: None



PROCEDURES MANUAL
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Release of Information:

Policy Document: This policy document is public information and may be released upon request.

Procedures Manual: The procedures manual for this policy may be released in its entirety or in part, with the prior approval of the Secretary/designee.

DC-ADM 009, Media Relations Procedures Manual
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Section 1 – General Procedures

A. Responsibilities

1. Department Communications/Press Office - The Department Communications/Press Office consists of a Communications Director and a Press Secretary who are responsible for serving as the Department’s overall spokespersons. These individuals report directly to the Governor’s Office of Communication and the Secretary of Corrections and are responsible for responding to media and public inquiries and releasing information regarding operations, procedures, and programs throughout the Department in accordance with this Section and Department policy **DC-ADM 003, “Release of Information.”** This office also consists of a Digital Director who is responsible for administering the operations of the Department’s website, www.cor.pa.gov, and the Department’s social media accounts, such as, but not limited to Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. This individual reports directly to the Governor’s Office of Communications and the Department’s Communications Director.¹
2. Facility Manager - Serves as the official spokesperson for the respective facility. This individual designates staff members to serve as the Primary and Alternate Public Information Officer (PIO).

NOTE: In the case of a Department of Corrections (DOC)-operated Community Corrections Center or parole office, the Center Director serves as the PIO for his/her respective center/office; a District Director/Deputy District Director serves as the PIO for his/her respective District/Sub Office.

3. Public Information Officer (PIO) - A Department employee designated by the Facility Manager to serve as the primary spokesperson for the facility. The PIO is responsible for responding to news media and public inquiries and releasing information regarding programs and procedures at his/her facility in accordance with this Section and Department policy **DC-ADM 003.**²
4. Alternate PIO - A Department employee designated by the Facility Manager to serve as an Alternate PIO. The Alternate PIO is responsible for responding to news media and public inquiries and releasing information regarding programs and procedures at his/her facility in the absence of the PIO and in accordance with this Section and Department policy **DC-ADM 003.**

B. General Access Information

1. Requests that involve photography, filming and/or audio recording of inmates, Department programs, and/or employees shall be referred to the appropriate facility’s PIO.

¹ 4-ACRS-7F-01, 4-APPFS-1C-01

² 5-ACI-1A-22, 4-APPFS-1C-01

2. At no time will inmates be compensated for interaction with a media representative/reporter.
3. The facility PIO or Alternate PIO must remain with the requesting entity at all times while they are on facility grounds.
4. Impromptu interviews with inmates are not permitted at any time.
5. Whenever an employee (other than the Facility Manager, PIO, or Alternate PIO) and/or an inmate is interviewed by a media representative, he/she must sign an **Inmate/Employee Waiver (Attachment 1-A)** indicating permission to be interviewed, etc.³

C. Filming Department Property

1. Filming and/or photography of Department facilities is not permitted at any time without seeking prior approval via the PIO. Even then, requests may be denied.
2. Individuals who do not obtain prior approval to film and/or photograph the facility may be directed to leave the property. If warranted, facility staff may call upon appropriate law enforcement to escort individuals off property.
3. Filming/photography of the facility's security aspects – such as, but not limited to, cameras, details of fences/walls, etc. – is not permitted.
4. Media representatives/reporters wishing to conduct “live stand ups” on prison property to lead into and/or out of media segments is permissible only after seeking and obtaining permission via the PIO. In other words, media representatives/reporters should not just show up and begin filming.
5. Entering a Facility
 - a. Media representatives/reporters enter a facility at their own risk.
 - b. If an incident arises while media representatives/reporters are present, they immediately will be escorted out of the facility.
 - c. The Department and its facilities/employees are not responsible for any damage to media equipment or injuries to media representatives that may occur on facility property.
 - d. Media representatives/reporters or media crews shall be escorted by the facility PIO or Alternate PIO for the entire duration of the visit.

³ 5-ACI-3D-06, 4-ACRS-7F-03

D. Media Representative/Reporter Access to Inmates⁴

1. Media representatives/reporters seeking access to a specific inmate shall be directed to conduct a visit with the inmate. Individuals should be referred to Department policy **DC-ADM 812, “Inmate Visiting Privileges.”**
 - a. The Department shall not act as a liaison between the media representative/reporter and the inmate.
 - b. The Department shall not make any special accommodations for media representatives/reporters wishing to visit with a specific inmate.
 - c. Once on the visitors list, all visiting rules and policies apply, including the fact that NO recording devices of any kind are permitted in visiting rooms.
 - d. The Department may provide media representatives/reporters with a pen and a paper tablet for note taking during the visit with the inmate. After keeping their notes, the pen and tablet should be returned.
2. Media representatives/reporters interested in speaking with inmates over the phone shall be instructed to follow Department policy **DC-ADM 818, “Automated Inmate Telephone System.”**

E. Media Access to Department Programs

The Department encourages highlighting its various programs, activities, and initiatives.⁵

1. Media representatives/reporters wishing to cover Department programs that do not involve inmates being present should contact the facility PIO.
 - a. The PIO will review the request with the Facility Manager, who will either approve or deny the request.
 - b. If approved, the PIO will limit the duration of the access based upon his/her schedule.
 - c. The PIO and/or Alternate PIO will remain present at all times to ensure Department policy is followed.
 - d. Inmate faces may not be filmed or photographed.
 - e. Impromptu interviews with inmates are not permitted.
 - f. If denied, the PIO will provide the explanation.

⁴ 5-ACI-1A-22, 5-ACI-3D-06, 4-ACRS-7F-02

⁵ 4-ACRS-7F-01, 4-APPFS-1C-01

2. Media representatives/reporters wishing to cover Department programs, including the inmates in those programs, shall complete and submit a **Media Access Request Form (Attachment 1-B)** to the facility PIO at least three weeks prior to the desired date of access.
 - a. If approved, the PIO will limit the duration of the access based upon his/her schedule.
 - b. The PIO and/or Alternate PIO will remain present at all times to ensure Department policy is followed.
 - c. If denied, the PIO will provide the explanation.
 - d. This type of access is not intended to allow the media representative/reporter to seek out a specific inmate who may be in a particular Department program in order to circumvent the Department's inmate visiting policy. Any requestor for whom it is clear that they are trying to access a specific inmate will have their request denied, and the requestor will be instructed to conduct a visit.
 - e. Any interviews or discussions with inmates in the program must focus only on the program.
 - f. Inmates shall only be referred to by their first names.
 - g. Inmate faces may not be filmed or photographed.
 - h. Impromptu interviews with inmates are not permitted.

F. Media Access to Department Community Work Program (CWP) Crews and Inmate Speakers Bureaus⁶

In the event a media representative/reporter covers any inmate participating in an Inmate Speakers Bureau Event or CWP Project with or without prior knowledge of the Department or facility, the media representative/reporter should immediately be instructed by the facility PIO, escorting Department personnel, or crew supervisor/foreman of the following:

1. for CWP crews, ONLY the CWP crew foreman may speak to/be interviewed by media representatives/reporters;
2. filming/photography must be done in a way so that the inmate is not identifiable;⁷ and
3. the escorting Department personnel or crew supervisor/foreman shall inform the PIO of such media contact as soon as possible.

⁶ 4-ACRS-7F-02

⁷ 5-ACI-1A-22, 5-ACI-3D-06

G. Media Access to Employees

Only the Communications Director, Press Secretary, or PIO and/or Alternate PIO is permitted to speak with media representatives/reporters.

1. If an employee wishes to contact a media representative/reporter, he/she should discuss such desires with the PIO and/or Alternate PIO prior to any contact being made. Depending on the desired outcome of the media contact, completion of and review of appropriate forms may be required prior to any contact being made. The PIO will review the request with the Facility Manager.
2. A media representative/reporter wishing to interview an employee must make the request to the PIO.

NOTE: Employees who are contacted at home for an interview are to deny the request and refer the media representative/reporter to the PIO on the next business day. The employee, on the next business day, also must report the media representative/reporter contact to the PIO or Alternate PIO.

- a. After the media representative/reporter has contacted the PIO requesting to interview an employee, the PIO will discuss the request with the Facility Manager. If the Facility Manager approves the interview request, the PIO will set up the interview date and time to coincide with the employee's work shift/schedule. The location of the interview at the facility is determined by the Facility Manager.
- b. The PIO or Alternate PIO will remain present for the entire interview. If the interview takes place over the telephone, the PIO and the employee will conduct a conference call with the media representative/reporter using a speaker phone.
- c. If the request is denied by the Facility Manager and the employee decides to conduct an interview as a private citizen, the interview may be conducted under these circumstances:
 - (1) must conduct the interview off facility grounds;
 - (2) must not speak on behalf of or represent the Department;
 - (3) must not wear Department uniform, if they wear one to perform their duties; and
 - (4) must not divulge confidential information.

H. Media Coverage of Emergency Situations at a Department Facility⁸

1. In the event of an emergency situation at a facility, officials may notify the public and media by:
 - a. issuing a press release;
 - b. posting information to the Department’s website (www.cor.pa.gov);
 - c. posting information to one or more of the Department’s social media accounts;
 - d. providing information via the Department’s Emergency Information Line (888-316-8950); or
 - e. providing on-site media briefings.
2. Each facility has a designated media briefing area where media representatives/reporters shall be directed to report in the event of an emergency.⁹
3. Media representatives/reporters must not stray from this area during an emergency.
4. The Department Communications Director, Press Secretary, facility PIO, and/or Alternate PIO will conduct scheduled briefings as necessary during the length of an emergency.

I. Media Representative/Reporter Access to a Capital Case Inmate¹⁰

1. Capital case inmates in the DOC are housed and have privileges in accordance with their capital case phase. There are three phases:
 - a. Phase 1 is a general population capital case inmate;
 - b. Phase 2 is a capital case inmate that has an active warrant/notice of execution; and
 - c. Phase 3 is when that capital case inmate is transported to the execution facility.
2. Phase 1 capital case inmates visiting is governed under Department policy **DC-ADM 812**.
3. Phase 2 and 3 capital case inmates, by statute, only are permitted to visit with immediate family, spiritual advisors, and/or attorneys of record. All visits in these phases are non-contact.

⁸ 5-ACI-1A-22

⁹ 5-ACI-1A-22

¹⁰ 5-ACI-3D-06

4. Interview Visit with Phase 1 Capital Case Inmate

Media representatives/reporters wishing to interview/visit a Phase 1 capital case inmate should follow **Subsection D. above**.

5. Interview/Visit with Phase 2 or 3 Capital Case Inmate

It is suggested that the media representatives/reporters write to the inmate first to see if the inmate is interested.

- a. If the inmate is not interested, even if a court order is issued, the DOC will not force an inmate to participate in an interview/visit.¹¹
- b. If the inmate is interested, the requesting media representatives/reporters then shall seek a court order from the sentencing judge/court. Only a court order from the sentencing judge (or court if the judge is no longer in office), can order others not allowed by statute to interview/visit. Such interviews/visits will be non-contact and no recording devices of any kind are permitted. A media representative/reporter will be provided by the facility with a pen and paper tablet to be used to take notes during the interview/visit.

6. Phone Call with Phase 2 or 3 Capital Case Inmate

- a. Should media representatives/reporters wish to interview the Phase 2 or 3 capital case inmate over the phone, the previously-noted court order is still required.
- b. It is suggested that the media representatives/reporters write to the inmate first to see if the inmate is interested. If the inmate is not interested, even if a court order is issued, the DOC will not force an inmate to participate in an interview/visit or phone call.¹²

J. Public Flag Display and Notification Procedures

1. Display of flags on Department facility grounds shall occur in accordance with **Management Directive 205.24, Display of Flags on Commonwealth Buildings and Grounds**.
2. National and state flags shall be displayed in accordance with direction provided by the Department of General Services. Questions regarding the display of national and state flags on Commonwealth buildings and grounds shall be referred to the Department of General Services.
3. In the event of the death of a Department employee, Department flags may be lowered to half-staff as follows:

¹¹ 5-ACI-3D-06

¹² 5-ACI-3D-06

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- a. When a death occurs in the line of duty or is a consequence of the performance of official duties, the Department flag shall be lowered at all Department facilities for a period of time authorized by the Secretary or designee. Lowering the flag at all Department facilities shall require the approval of the Secretary or designee.
 - b. When a death occurs for reasons unrelated to the employee's official duties, the Department flag shall be lowered at the facility of employment for a period of time authorized by the Regional Deputy Secretary (RDS) or designee. The Facility Manager shall request approval to lower the Department's flag from the facility's RDS.
4. When the Department's flag is lowered, the Press Office shall advise employees and the general public of the reason for lowering of the Department's flag.
- a. Employees shall be advised via posting on the internal Intranet page.
 - b. The general public shall be advised via posting on the Department's public website.

DC-ADM 009, Media Relations Procedures Manual
Glossary of Terms

Alternate Public Information Officer (PIO) - A Department employee designated by the Facility Manager to serve as an Alternate PIO.

Audio Recording - The recording and playback of audio information.

Capital Case inmates - Inmates who are sentenced to death.

Communications Director - The person designated as the official spokesperson for the Department.

Department - The Pennsylvania Department of Corrections.

Department Flag - The flag of the Department of Corrections.

Emergency/Emergency Situations - An event or situation that, if unchecked or unresolved quickly, may have serious impact or repercussions on the Department, public, facility, staff, or inmate population.

Emergency Information Line - A 24-hour-a-day recorded message maintained by the Press Office that can be accessed by the public for updates to incidents or emergencies in a Department facility.

Facility Manager - The Superintendent of a State Correctional Facility, Director of a Community Corrections Center, Commander of a Motivational Boot Camp, or Director of the Training Academy.

Filming - All photography utilizing motion pictures, videotape, or other imaging media, including television programs, commercials, motion pictures, still photography, etc.

Impromptu Interviews - Surprise, unannounced, unplanned interviews with inmates.

Media Briefing Area - An area designated by prison officials for media representatives/reporters to report to in order to cover a major emergency. This is the area where information will be provided by the Department to media representatives/reporters during such an emergency situation.

Media Representative/Reporter - Representatives of general circulation newspapers, national magazines, national/international news services, or radio/television stations holding a Federal Communications Commission (FCC) license. Also, individuals using social media, such as, but not limited to Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, etc., to share information about the Department.

Photography - All photography using 35 mm, instant (Polaroid), digital, or other still-imaging equipment.

Press Office - The Office of the Communications Director for the Department.

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Glossary of Terms

Public Information Officer (PIO) - The person designated as the official spokesperson for a facility.

Secretary - The Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections.

State Flag - The official flag of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.