

**INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES
ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

Policy Number: EA-3

Effective Date: October 1, 2024

Version: 4.0

POLICY TITLE: MEDIA CONTACT

OVERVIEW: The Department of Child Services (DCS) will be responsive, professional, and transparent when communicating with the media. All media requests will be routed to the Director of Communications or designee for review. If the Director of Communications or designee grants prior approval, requests for basic information about general business operations or program overviews may in some circumstances be handled by DCS Local Office Directors (LODs), Program Directors, Regional Managers (RMs), and/or Deputy Directors. All media requests for information regarding specific cases, policy positions, or critical incidents and all requests for interviews will be referred to the Director of Communications.

I. DEFINITIONS

Media: Any means of mass communication including, but not limited to, the internet, newspapers, magazines, radio, podcasts, and television. Media may refer to a group of journalists and others who work in the communications industry and includes student journalists, bloggers, creators, influencers, and others seeking information for the purposes of publication.

II. REFERENCES

- A. [EA-5 Constituent Correspondence](#)
- B. [EA-7 Speaking Engagements, Guest Appearances, and Public Presentations](#)
- C. [IC 5-14-4: Public Access Counselor](#)

III. STATEMENTS OF PURPOSE

- A. DCS will be responsive, professional, and transparent when communicating with the media while protecting a child and family's confidential information.
- B. The Director of Communications or designee:
 - 1. Is to be consulted prior to any DCS employee responding to a media request for information;
 - 2. Shall coordinate and approve media interviews; and
 - 3. Will be notified within one (1) hour of a critical event expected to receive significant media attention.
- C. All media inquiries are to be reported to the Director of Communications by email immediately, when possible, but no later than the same business day.
- D. Employees who receive a request for public records from a member of the media should immediately send the request to the DCS public records mailbox at dcspublic.recordsrequest@dcs.in.gov.
- E. The DCS Legal division shall ensure compliance with all Public Access reporting requirements of [IC 5-14-4](#).
- F. All contractors and service providers will have approval from the Director of Communications or designee prior to releasing media that relates to DCS.

IV. PROCEDURE

- A. It is imperative for the DCS communications team to respond in an informative and timely manner to the media and other individuals requesting information. The DCS local office will contact the Director of Communications or designee by email within one (1) hour of learning of a critical event, regardless of the time of day. Examples of critical events include, but are not limited to:
1. Fatality or near fatality of a child who is in the care of DCS or was previously in the care of DCS;
 2. Any other child fatality or near fatality suspected to be due to Child Abuse or Neglect (CA/N) reported to DCS that may receive public attention in the media;
 3. Allegations of CA/N, felony offenses, serious misconduct by DCS staff, volunteers, or DCS providers who serve children;
 4. Reports that an employee, a volunteer, or service provider is arrested and/or charged with a crime;
 5. Public, media, or legislative inquiry or involvement regarding policy or a case decision;
 6. Any significant concern or complaint brought to the attention of DCS by an individual that cannot be resolved at the local level or if calls of a complaint, requests for intervention, or review to central office are anticipated;

Note: Any constituent concern or complaint will be referred to the Constituent Services Representative (see policy [EA-5 Constituent Correspondence](#)).

7. Natural disasters, threats, or other security concerns made to staff or facilities that serve children in the care and custody of DCS; and
 8. Any event that has or has the potential to generate negative media attention, including on social media, for DCS.
- B. When a staff member receives a media call or inquiry, the staff member should immediately forward the voicemail or email to the Director of Communications or Deputy Director of Communications, who will gather the basic information, including the reporter's name, organization, contact information, story idea, questions, and deadline. No DCS employee should provide information to the media or guarantee a response by deadline without prior approval of the Director of Communications or designee.
- C. No DCS employee shall agree to or submit to an interview, on- or off-camera, without prior approval from the Director of Communications or designee.
- D. A staff member will notify the Director of Communications or designee of a media inquiry immediately, when possible, but no later than the same business day, via email or phone call, regardless of the time of day the inquiry is received.
- E. The Director of Communications or designee will coordinate interviews with DCS employees, as appropriate, and will assist with the development of talking points in consultation with subject matter experts prior to the interview.
- F. In the event a staff member inadvertently responds to a media request, the employee must notify the Director of Communications or designee immediately by email or telephone.

- G. Staff who are attending public events at which media might be present should ensure they have authorization to speak to media prior to attending the event and have approved talking points (see [EA-7 Speaking Engagements, Guest Appearances, and Public Presentations](#)).
- H. If staff are approached by media at a public event and are not pre-authorized to speak to media, they should direct media to contact the Communications Division with questions.
- I. Any requests from contractors, service providers, or stakeholders for a joint media release that references DCS or uses the DCS logo must be sent to the communications team a minimum of two (2) weeks prior to release date for consideration and cannot be released without approval.

DATE: 9/16/24

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