

 ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES State of Tennessee Department of Correction	Index #: 103.04	Page 1 of 5
	Effective Date: November 15, 2019	
	Distribution: A	
	Supersedes: 103.04 (11/15/16)	
Approved by: Tony Parker		
Subject: PROVISION OF INFORMATION AND ACCESS TO THE MEDIA AND PUBLIC		

- I. AUTHORITY: TCA 4-3-603, TCA 4-3-606, and TCA 10-7-503.
- II. PURPOSE: To establish guidelines for the provision of information to the public and regulate staff and offender contacts with the media.
- III. APPLICATION: All Tennessee Department of Correction (TDOC) employees, offenders, and privately managed institutions.
- IV. DEFINITIONS:
 - A. Communications Director: The departmental spokesperson, designated by the Commissioner, whose role is to coordinate the dissemination of information and statements concerning the Department.
 - B. News Media: Tennessee-based news publications, accredited news services such as the Associated Press, licensed radio and television broadcast stations or networks, and government franchised community cable television systems that originate scheduled news programming. This includes newspapers and magazines, published at least weekly or monthly and containing news and feature articles appealing to a broad spectrum of interest. News media excludes broadcast programs syndicated by independent producers, or television stations or networks for the primary purpose of entertainment, and syndicated television broadcast talk shows.
 - C. Public Information Officer (PIO): Individuals designated by the Communications Director to assist him/her in facilitating media requests within each region for information and interviews and departmental communications.
- V. POLICY: The TDOC, as a public agency, shall manage contacts with the public and media, including internet web site content and social media sites through the Communications Director to ensure accurate dissemination of information and appropriate access to the institutions and offices without disruption to security or operational routines.
- VI. PROCEDURES:
 - A. Departmental Contacts:
 1. When any TDOC employee is contacted by a media source, the appropriate PIO/Warden/Superintendent or Director will contact the departmental Communications Director, or designee. In the event the Communications Director or designee is not available, the appropriate Deputy/Assistant Commissioner will be contacted.

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2. After consultation with the Communications Director/Designee and/or the Deputy/Assistant Commissioner, the Warden, Superintendent, Director, or liaison may respond to the media or schedule interviews with news media as governed by the guidelines provided in this policy.

B. General Guidelines:

1. The facility will be accessible to news media representatives, with the exception of those areas determined by the Warden/Superintendent to be inappropriate for confidentiality or security reasons, such as the armory, shower areas, individual cells, segregation areas, and clinic examination areas.
2. Groups of inmates will not be filmed or photographed if individual inmates can be readily identified, unless the TDOC Release and Permission for Interview/Photograph/Recording, CR-0555, is obtained from each inmate.
3. Any interview or visit by the news media may be denied, suspended, or terminated during the implementation of an emergency operation plan or under any other circumstances that pose a threat to the continued safety of persons and/or security of the facility or office.
4. The Communications Director or designee will answer media inquiries involving departmental policy development and departmental data.
5. The Communications Director should handle all contact with out-of-state, national, or international media. The Communications Director may authorize Wardens/Superintendents, Directors, or institutional liaisons to make follow up contacts with media for specific projects, events, or stories.
6. The Communications Director will verify the credentials of out-of-state, national, or international media. Access to the institutions will be allowed only with the specific authorization of the Commissioner.
7. News media wanting to videotape or photograph exteriors of a facility will be allowed to do so, provided that it does not disrupt normal business. Members of the media must notify the Communications Director and/or the Warden/Superintendent prior to their arrival at the facility and should remain in the parking lot. In the event that the Communications Director is not available, the Warden/Superintendent of the facility or a designee must be notified. Any video obtained from the parking lot shall not include inmates.
8. News media are not permitted to conduct interviews during videoconference meetings between attorneys and their clients
9. Live broadcasts (television, radio, telephone, or other electronic or communicative method) from inside the perimeter of an institution are not permitted without prior written authorization from the Commissioner or his designee.

C. Interviews-Incarcerated Offender: News media interviews with offenders may be permitted and subject to, but not limited to, the following restrictions:

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1. Except as provided in subsection (2) below, face to face news media interviews with offenders are not permitted. Telephone interviews with media on institutional phone lines will not be permitted. Inmates who wish to place the names and numbers of individual media representatives on their ITS calling lists may do so in accordance with Policy #503.08. Inmates may correspond in writing with media representatives in accordance with Policy #507.02.
2. News media members may request an interview with an unspecified inmate on a specific department program or topic. If deemed appropriate the Communications Director or designee will attempt to provide inmates appropriate for interview on such programs or topics. The approved inmate must complete the TDOC Release and Permission for Interview/Photograph/Recording, CR-0555, prior to the interview.
3. The Communications Director shall notify the Director of Victim Services of a potential media interview so that the appropriate victims/victim witness coordinator can be notified.

D. Release of Information - Offender: The Communications Director shall be notified of any request by the media for offender information. The Communications Director, Warden, Superintendent, Director, or designee shall release information about incidents as outlined in Policy #103.02. Information that may be released:

1. Name
2. Age
3. Race
4. Conviction and sentencing data (includes offenses if conviction has occurred)
5. General institutional assignments
6. Identification picture (to be copied or photographed, not furnished)
7. Selected information on specific inmates may be made available to the general public on an individual basis.
8. Probation/Parole status and supervision

E. Interviews - Staff: Personal interviews with staff members are subject to the following restrictions:

1. Interviews are voluntary.
2. Approval must be obtained in advance from the Warden/Superintendent/Director for any interview regarding the TDOC. This includes interviews conducted during the employee's working hours, after working hours, both on and off state property. The Communications Director or appropriate Deputy/Assistant Commissioner will be notified in advance of date and time of interview.

F. Incidents

1. After the reporting requirements of Policy #103.02 have been satisfied, all incidents of media significance (particularly Class A and B incidents) are to be reported to the Communications Director by the Assistant Commissioners of Prisons or Operational Support or a designee. Notification should be made without delay.

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2. The Communications Director shall be notified of all incidents of media significance via his/her assigned cellular phone, e-mail, and/or home telephone.
3. It is the Communication Director's responsibility to return calls and messages within seven business days.
4. The Communications Director shall be given all essential information pertinent to the circumstances of the incident and persons involved in order to respond to media inquiries.
5. After a report is given, the Communications Director, in consultation with the Commissioner, will determine where media inquiries are to be directed for the particular incident.
6. Releases to the media will be in a timely manner and prepared and distributed by the Communications Director for incidents relating to high-risk escapes or incidents that could jeopardize public safety. All other releases will be issued on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the Commissioner and the Communications Director. At privately managed facilities, these activities shall be conducted by the private contractor's Communications Officer(s) only after approval by the TDOC Communications Director.

G. Public Information/Other Events/Internet Web Site Content

1. The TDOC annual report will be made available to the media and the general public. Additional information regarding the Department and its operations, such as statistical reports and inspection results, may be forwarded to the media and the general public upon request. All institutional contingency and transportation plans shall be treated as confidential and shall not be open for inspection by members of the media and public.
2. Wardens/Superintendents/Directors/liaisons may contact local media to cover a specific event or meeting (such as a fund-raising event) with the Communications Director's approval. Within one work day after the event or meeting, the Warden/Superintendent or designee will report to the Communications Director about the coverage of the event/incident.
3. No facility or division is to issue a written press release to the news media. Upon approval and review by the Communications Director, a facility or division drafted press release shall be issued by the Communications Director or his/her designee from Central Office.
4. All TDOC web site format and content should be reviewed by the Communications Director prior to going on-line. This includes any new web pages as well as revisions/updates to existing pages, excluding those updates provided by Decision Support: Research and Planning. All questions addressed to the departmental Webmaster should be answered by the Communications Director or a designee in a timely manner (two business days). The Communications Director or web developer shall ensure that all web site content meets the state standard established for internet publication.

H. Parole Hearings:

1. Media shall have access to parole hearings in accordance with Policy #103.03.

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2. The Warden/Superintendent/District Director or designee shall confer with the parole board members on-site before admitting the media to a parole hearing.
3. Media shall be escorted to and from parole hearings by institutional staff.
4. Because parole hearings are considered an open court proceeding, inmates who appear can be videotaped, photographed or recorded without signing a consent form. The general provisions of this policy should still apply to interviews before or after the hearing. No interviews shall be conducted outside the hearing without the inmate's written permission.

- I. Tours: TDOC frequently offers tours of correctional facilities to various groups and organizations in accordance with guidelines established by each facility. Juveniles who are under the jurisdiction of a juvenile justice system will not be allowed to tour.

VII. APPLICABLE FORMS: CR-0555.

VIII. ACA STANDARDS: 2-CO-1A-30, 4-4021, 4-APPFS-1C-01, and 2-CO-1A-27.

IX. DIVISION OF PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY: Office of Community Engagement.