

State of Iowa Department of Corrections Policy and Procedures

Policy Number: AD-GA-09

Applicability: Institutions, CBC, Central Office, IPI

Policy Code: Public Access

Iowa Code Reference: [Chapter 21, 904.602](#)

Chapter 1: ADMINISTRATION & MANAGEMENT

Sub Chapter: GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

Related DOC Policies: [AD-PR-29](#), [OP-MTV-01](#), [OP-MTV-03](#), [OP-MTV-04](#)

Administrative Code Reference: N/A

Subject: CONTACT WITH THE MEDIA AND THE PUBLIC

PREA Standards: N/A

Responsibility: Paul Cornelius

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Authority:

1. PURPOSE

To describe the methods that shall be used in the Iowa Department of Corrections (IDOC) institutions and community-based corrections to maintain informative relations with media representatives and the public.

2. POLICY

Within security limitations and privacy protection statutes, including consideration of possible disruptiveness and resource demands on department staff, it is the policy of the IDOC to maintain open communication with representatives of the media and the public and, within security concerns, allow access to IDOC institutions or community-based corrections locations.

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3. DEFINITIONS – As used in this document:

- A. Media Representative – A qualified and properly credentialed representative of general circulation newspapers, magazines of national circulation sold through newsstands and/or mail subscriptions to the general public, national/international news services, or radio/television stations holding a Federal Communications Commission license.
- B. New Media - Any media from newspaper articles and blogs to music and podcasts that are delivered digitally. From a website or email to mobile phones/devices and streaming apps, any internet-related form of communication.
- C. Public – Individuals who are not officials in the law enforcement or academic communities, media representatives, employees of the IDOC, or clients/incarcerated individuals or their family members.

4. PROCEDURES

A. Media Visits and Interviews

1. When media representatives visit an IDOC location, the Warden/District Director/Designee and the IDOC's Chief of Staff have the responsibility to grant, deny, or guide the extent of:
 - a. Coverage of institutional/community-based corrections functions and special events.

- b. Use of facilities, personnel, clients/incarcerated individuals, or records in connection with the making of motion pictures and the writing of books, magazine articles, or syndicated stories.
 - c. Interviews with clients/incarcerated individuals and/or staff.
- 2. For IDOC Institutions Only: Personal interviews and photographs of an incarcerated individual are not allowed except under special circumstances, and only with the approval of the Warden/Designee and the IDOC's Chief of Staff. The term "personal interview" shall refer exclusively to interactions conducted in-person or via electronic means (including telephone and video) that are transmitted via live-stream to a public audience. Private telephonic or digital communications that are not broadcast live are expressly excluded from this definition. These requests must be submitted by both the incarcerated individual and those facilitating the interview in writing or email and shall be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. If approved and the incarcerated individual agrees to the interview, the incarcerated individual shall be required to consent (see **AD-GA-09 F-1 Media Request Form**) in writing, waiving any and all liability against the IDOC. The interview shall take place in areas where security is not a concern. The approval and consent restrictions are waived during public meetings (i.e., Parole Board hearings) pursuant to **Code of Iowa, Chapter 21**, absent security violations or concerns.
- 3. Any media visit of any purpose can be denied, canceled, or restricted by the Warden/District Director/the IDOC's Chief of Staff/Designee for security concerns based on present circumstances, and subject matter, including, but not limited to, pending appeals, or legal matters including criminal and civil related to the client/incarcerated individual, adjustment, need to complete treatment programming, unsuccessful or failure to participate in required or recommended treatment programming, seriousness of the criminal conviction, re-victimization, security status, pending commutation reviews, etc. Consideration with their victimization may be considered prior to approval with the Director of Victim and Restorative Justice Programs.
- 4. For IDOC institutions only: Correspondence and communication between the media and clients/incarcerated individuals shall be guided by the same regulations imposed by the institution for general correspondence (see **OP-MTV-01, OP-MTV-03, OP-MTV-04**).
- 5. For IDOC residential facilities only: Correspondence and communication between the media and community-based corrections residential clients shall be guided by the same regulations imposed by the residential facility for general correspondence.

6. Scheduled media visits must be submitted in writing or email and, at a minimum, shall include the person(s) (staff/client/incarcerated individual) to be interviewed, reason for interview, subject matter, the name of the representing media organization and the name of the media representative.
7. All media contacts, even unscheduled media contacts with staff of a routine or general nature shall be immediately reported to the Warden/District Director/Designee who shall report the contact to the IDOC's Chief of Staff.
8. With the exception of public meetings, all media representatives are subject to a security check and must be prepared to present media credentials showing that they represent or are employed by a bonafide or incorporated media organization.
9. For IDOC institutions only: If the media representative is conducting a visit with an incarcerated individual that was scheduled using the department visiting policy, media will be allowed a pencil and paper to record notes during the visit. They shall make the Warden and/or IDOC Chief of Staff aware of the date(s) of the visit so that visiting room security staff can be made aware and allow for the writing utensils.
10. For IDOC residential facilities only: If the media representative is conducting an approved visit with a client at the residential facility, they shall make the District Director and IDOC Chief of Staff aware of the date(s) of the visit so that local residential facility staff may prepare for security supervision.

B. Release of News Items

1. Information of a routine or general nature may be released to the newspaper, radio, television station, wire service, etc. by the Warden/District Director/Designee after consultation and approval by the IDOC Chief of Staff.
2. Media contacts or inquiries regarding an incident that is considered serious or critical shall be released to the IDOC media distribution list. Routine matters such as minor disturbances or a fight may not be reported to the media. The IDOC shall maintain a media notification list for those media organizations that request to be directly contacted upon initial notice of an incident. All media notices or releases shall be sent by e-mail and posted on the IDOC website.
3. There are two types of media releases:
 - a. General Media Release – normally involves major changes, improvements, staff or client/incarcerated individual recognitions of the institution. Such

changes or improvements shall be described in writing and be released by the Warden/District Director, Chief of Staff/Designee.

- b. Emergency Media Release – normally involves deaths, escapes, acts of violence, hostage situations, disturbances, fires, and natural disasters. If the incident in such cases necessitates coverage at the IDOC location, representatives of the news media shall be located in a designated area on or near the perimeter of the institution/facility. The Warden/District Director, IDOC's Chief of Staff/Designee shall periodically update the situation.
4. News releases shall have two formats:
 - a. Telephone or person-to-person interviews - The information shared with the media shall be factual in nature. Relevant information shall be limited to the event or incident.
 - b. Written media releases (press release). Major media releases shall be brief, concise, factual, and approved by the Warden/District Director/Designee and the IDOC's Chief of Staff. The Chief of Staff shall forward copies of all media releases to the IDOC Director.
5. Information that may jeopardize security, investigations, and control of the institution/facility's attempt to restore or return to normal operations shall be withheld until such time as the need no longer exists. Confidential information shall be withheld. (**AD-PR-29** *Confidentiality of Information*)

C. Emergency Announcement

1. If a client/incarcerated individual(s) escapes or absconds, the supervising institution/facility shall immediately contact all area law enforcement agencies and the IDOC's Chief of Staff as determined by policy.
2. The IDOC's Chief of Staff shall immediately notify the largest print media organization within 25 miles (minimum) of the incident and the Associated Press.

D. Public Contacts

1. Employee contacts with the public, clients/individuals or client/incarcerated individual family members, regarding Department of Corrections operations must be professional and respectful at all times.
2. Employees that are authorized contact with the public, client/incarcerated individuals or client/incarcerated individual family members, shall be knowledgeable of the subject matter and experienced in public speaking, to ensure prompt, courteous, and correct responses to inquiries.
3. Personnel assigned or authorized to publicly address any IDOC issue must be knowledgeable of public information, and confidentiality regulations and applicable statutes.
4. Employees receiving requests from the public, clients/incarcerated individuals or client/incarcerated individual family members, regarding IDOC business information shall refer all such inquiries to the office of the Warden/District Director, the institution/community-based corrections' Public Information Officer, who shall then report it to the IDOC Chief of Staff.
5. Employees receiving requests for comments or operational/security/video information from the media or public, client/incarcerated individuals or client/incarcerated individual family members, shall refer such requests directly to the office of the Warden/District Director, the institution/community-based corrections' Public Information Officer, who shall then report such to the IDOC's Chief of Staff.
 - a. Response to inquiries must be prompt and accurate.
 - b. All responses shall meet all applicable local, state and federal laws governing public information and right of privacy.

Operational/security/video is confidential under **Iowa Code Section 904.602(10)** and at no time shall staff release video/camera footage to the media or members of the general public. **Iowa Code Section 904.602(6)** does allow the release of confidential information, including video to a public official (law enforcement, county attorney) if ties to their official duties as outlined in IDOC Policy **AD-CR-04** *Release of Information*.

E. Compensation

1. Individual compensation for participation in public information programs related to the employee's job responsibilities shall not be accepted.

2. Donations to the institution/community-based corrections may be accepted, and must be processed through the designated Associate Warden/Assistant Director/Administration.