

UTAH DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Policy: 01-06

Effective Date: October 1, 1997

Revision Date: Sept. 5, 2017

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MEDIA INTERACTION & PUBLIC INFORMATION POLICY

RATIONALE: To guide Division/Office/Institution practices when releasing public information and to ensure authorized DHS employees respond to media requests with accurate information in a timely manner while adhering to federal and state laws.

I. DEFINITIONS:

- A. Department or DHS – Utah Department of Human Services
- B. D/O/I – DHS Divisions, Offices and Institutions
- C. PIO – Public Information Officer, hired full-time or designated part-time to manage DHS or D/O/I-specific media requests and public communications
- D. GRAMA, FOIA – [Government Records Access and Management Act](#), [Freedom of Information Act](#)

II. AUTHORIZED MEDIA CONTACTS:

- A. D/O/Is are encouraged to officially designate a trained PIO to ensure a unified, consistent message across the Department. D/O/I PIOs work with the DHS Communications Director to coordinate strategy, media engagement and communication efforts. The DHS PIO shall serve as PIO for D/O/Is that do not have a designated PIO.
- B. To achieve a consistent, unified message and approach to media strategy across DHS, individuals designated to speak to the media should complete DHS media training. Individuals not trained may speak to the media in an area of expertise, but such an individual shall first obtain permission from the D/O/I PIO or DHS PIO and prepare for the media engagement with a PIO.
- C. Hiring and/or designation of a new D/O/I PIO shall be approved by the DHS Communications Director prior to selection.

III. MEDIA INTERACTION PROTOCOL

- A. **Direct Contact** – Individuals who are not designated PIOs and are directly contacted by a member of the media can ensure high quality professionalism by:
 - i. Taking the reporter’s name, outlet, deadline and contact information;
 - ii. Referring the reporter to the D/O/I designated PIO;
 - iii. Contacting the appropriate D/O/I PIO or DHS PIO immediately for next steps;
 - iv. DHS or D/O/I PIO or PIO designee responding to media within one hour; and
 - v. Having a PIO or other designee present during the interview to “shadow” or witness the interaction.
- B. **Meetings and Events Where Media is Present**
 - i. Individuals speaking publically at an open meeting, conference, court proceeding, legislative testimony or other public event may be quoted by media. This is acceptable as open events are a matter of public record and create transparency. Individuals who believe there is a potential their statement was quoted by media shall notify the appropriate D/O/I or DHS PIO immediately following the presentation. Individuals approached by media following a public statement may answer follow-up questions related to their statements. Any other individual approached by media for an interview at an event or public meeting shall refer the reporter to the D/O/I or DHS PIO per protocol.

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- C. **High Profile Incidents** — DHS employees who are aware of a high-profile event that may generate media interest or are already being reported in the media can ensure a timely response by:
 - i. Alerting the D/O/I PIO or DHS PIO via email or phone within one hour of high profile or media notice. Indicate if media is already reporting on the story and what, if any, mention of DHS involvement is being reported by media; and
 - ii. Following their D/O/I protocol to report the incident.

I. COMMUNICATION STANDARDS

A. Proactive Media

- i. Only a designated PIO shall disseminate media materials or contact media to ensure a coordinated and consistent effort as a Department, unless otherwise authorized by the DHS PIO.
- ii. D/O/Is are encouraged to share important information, events, reports and stories that may be of interest to media and a mass public audience with designated PIOs. The PIO is responsible for determining newsworthiness of the information, strategy for targeting the media pitch, and other communication channels that could be used to communicate the message.

B. Communication Materials and Graphic Standards

- i. To ensure a unified DHS look and feel, public materials produced by D/O/Is shall follow DHS Graphic Standards and must be approved by the D/O/I PIO or DHS PIO before publication or printing.
- ii. Online communication including websites, social media, intranets and blogs shall comply with the [DHS Online Communications Policy](#).
- iii. All contracts and internal hires with a primary role for graphic design or multimedia production for a D/O/I shall be selected with the approval of the DHS Communications Director and agree to follow DHS Graphic Standards.
- iv. All communications shall comply with [State GRAMA statute](#) and the [Freedom of Information Act](#).

C. Governor's Office Involvement

- i. All proactive requests for the Governor's, or member of the Governor's Office's, time or involvement in events, media or proclamations shall be coordinated through the DHS Communications Director.
- ii. Any issue that may rise to the Governor's Office or involvement should be communicated to through the DHS Communications Director.

D. GRAMA Requests

- i. Media requests for public information shall be referred to the relevant designated D/O/I GRAMA Officer who shall grant or deny access of information following [Utah Code](#).
- ii. GRAMA Officers shall provide the media request for public information to the D/O/I PIO or DHS PIO and appropriate legal counsel for review prior to responding to the request.
- iii. The PIO may choose to send the GRAMA response to the media requestor on behalf of the GRAMA Officer.

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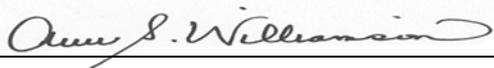
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II. EMPLOYEE FREE SPEECH

- i. DHS employees may speak to media and on social media on their own time on matters outside of official DHS business. Unauthorized staff shall refrain from representing themselves as an official spokesperson or speaking on behalf of Department opinion.
- ii. Employees are prohibited at any time from commenting on information restricted under GRAMA or FOIA laws. Doing so may subject the employee to criminal prosecution under these laws.
- iii. Employees shall use personal social media accounts in compliance with the [State of Utah's Social Media Guidelines](#). Employees shall reserve any online official presence of the Department for the DHS Communications Team per the [DHS Online Communications Policy](#).



Date: September 5, 2017

Ann Silverberg Williamson, Executive Director
Department of Human Services