




**COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH
POLICY # CM-07002
MEDIA RELATIONS POLICY**

Approval:	 District Health Director	5.27.22
		Date

1.0 PURPOSE

The intent of this policy is to establish guidelines for Media Relations for the County Board of Health (CBOH).

2.0 AUTHORITY

The Media Relations Policy is published under the authority of the County Board of Health (CBOH) and in compliance with the following:

- 2.1.1 CBOH is a public employer and therefore has some protection under the First Amendment, or Right to Free Speech.
- 2.1.2 Political activity is protected as stated under CBOH Political Activity Policy No. GC-09012.

3.0 SCOPE

This policy applies to employees of the County Board of Health.

4.0 DEFINITIONS

- 4.1 **CBOH** – County Board of Health
- 4.2 **DHD/AA** – District Health Director/Appointing Authority
- 4.3 **DPH** – Georgia Department of Public Health
- 4.4 **DCD** – DPH Communications Division
- 4.5 **ORR** – Open Records Requests
- 4.6 **PIO** – District Public Information Officer
- 4.7 **RC** – District Risk Communicator
- 4.8 **SME** – Subject Matter Expert
- 4.9 **HIPAA** – Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 is United States legislation that provides data privacy and security provisions for safeguarding medical information.

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5.0 POLICY

It is CBOH's policy to provide accurate, timely and relevant public health information with legitimate public health purpose to media, the public, health care providers and others.

Legitimate public health purpose means a population-based activity or individual effort primarily aimed at the prevention of injury, disease or premature mortality, or the promotion of health in the community, including (a) assessing the health needs and status of the community through public health surveillance and epidemiological research, (b) developing public health policy, and (c) responding to public health needs and emergencies.

5.1 Accountability

5.1.1 This policy governs the release of information to the media. Information is defined as information in any form provided to media, including but not limited to, public health information, DPH statements, interviews, press releases, media advisories, news features, audio and/or video news releases. (Not included under this definition are scientific and technical reports or articles and technical information in professional journals.)

5.1.2 This policy governs how CBOH employees should handle all media requests or calls from the news media and/or reporters. This policy will establish uniform and effective procedures for interacting with the media.

5.1.3 This policy covers the proper handling for information contained in news releases, interviews, speaking engagements and organized media events involving CBOH staff.

6.0 RESPONSIBILITIES

6.1 PIO and/or RC is responsible for issuing and updating procedures to implement this policy.

6.2 PIO and/or RC is responsible for conducting news media relations for the agency.

6.3 PIO and/or RC is responsible for establishing news media relations policies and priorities.

6.4 PIO and/or RC is responsible for coordinating and reviewing the performance of all news media relations activities.

6.5 PIO and/or RC is responsible for coordinating these activities with District and County Boards of Health.

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6.6 PIO and/or RC is responsible for clearance of news media releases, activities, events, and materials.

6.7 CBOH managers and supervisors are responsible for monitoring employees' compliance to policy terms.

7.0 PROCEDURES

7.1 Points of Contact and Approval

7.1.1 **Media Inquiries** - All incoming inquiries should be addressed via phone or email to the PIO and/or RC.

7.1.2 **Media Outreach** - All outgoing pitches to the media should be addressed via phone or email to the PIO and/or RC.

7.1.3 All requests for external media communications information, interviews, or organized media events should be addressed via phone or email to the PIO and/or RC.

7.1.4 **Interim & Final Approval** - The approval process includes the following:

7.1.4.1 External communications (i.e., preliminary talking points, news releases, publications, and speeches) may be drafted at the subject matter expert (SME) level and forwarded to the PIO and/or RC for review and approval.

7.1.4.2 Select communications may also require the approval of the DHD/AA.

7.2 General

7.2.1 The CBOH seeks to provide the appropriate dissemination of public health information.

7.2.2 Requests for public information concerning public health activities should be addressed promptly, factually, and as completely as possible in accordance with all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations.

7.2.3 To ensure timely responses for all requests for information, the CBOH will strive to ensure cooperation and coordination with DPH.

7.2.4 Responses to media inquiries should be brief, factual (sourced where applicable) and as complete as possible in accordance with HIPAA and all applicable federal and state laws and regulations.

7.2.5 Responses to media inquiries will be made via email whenever possible.

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7.2.6 CBOH is committed to conveying a response that is responsible, accurate, factual and appropriate to the media outlet or inquirer.

7.2.7 To ensure that the best possible service and information is disseminated to the media in a timely and efficient manner, all media inquiries must be referred to PIO and/or RC. This centralization of all media query handling ensures an effective and coordinated response that serves the best interests of our community.

7.2.8 DHD/AA and their appointed designees are the official spokespersons for CBOH. The PIO and/or RC and Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) who are approved by the DHD/AA may serve as spokespersons on select topics as appropriate.

7.2.9 CBOH does not comment on pending investigations, open procurements, audits, or matters under review by law enforcement or other federal, state, district or local entity.

7.3 Employees – Contact with the Media

7.3.1 All media inquiries must be referred to the PIO and/or RC as soon as they are received via email (preferred) or phone.

7.3.2 CBOH employees should not respond to requests for information from the media in any capacity. CBOH employees should not provide draft reports and/or preliminary findings to the media. All media inquiries must be referred to the PIO and/or RC.

7.3.3 Employees receiving calls from the media will transfer the caller to the PIO and/or RC. Because the media usually work under tight deadlines, these referrals should be made immediately after the inquiry is received.

7.3.4 This policy is not intended to curtail the ability of CBOH employees to exercise their First Amendment rights to freedom of speech. A CBOH employee is not prohibited from speaking to media about non-CBOH matters, so long as the employee does not expressly or impliedly purport to represent CBOH (for example, by wearing a CBOH badge or an article of clothing with the CBOH logo during a television interview).

7.4 Open Records Requests

7.4.1 Please see CBOH's *Public Records/Open Records Policy GC-09002*.

7.5 Corrections/Retractions

7.5.1 If a misquote in error or by omission has occurred, the PIO and/or RC may choose to request a correction or retraction of the media outlet.

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7.5.2 The correct and clarifying information should be sent to the media outlet via email with a confirmation email receipt.

7.5.3 The request for the Correction/Retraction should be made in/during the earliest possible publication or air date.

7.6 PROCEDURES REGARDING RELEASE OF INFORMATION TO MEDIA

7.6.1 Media Response Delivery Format

7.6.1.1 PIO and/or RC may agree to phone and/or face-to-face interviews on a select, case-by-case basis after determining merit and availability of the SME.

7.6.1.2 PIO and/or RC can set-up tentative interviews as appropriate with all necessary parties.

7.6.1.3 PIO and/or RC will confirm the interviews with all parties once final approval has been received.

7.6.2 Media Response Record Keeping

7.6.2.1 The PIO and/or RC will file and archive all interview notes.

7.6.2.2 The PIO and/or RC will save and archive media inquiry emails.

7.6.3 Media Response Approval

7.6.3.1 Selected public health responses of a sensitive or potentially volatile nature may require approval by the DPH Office of Communications or designee before release to the media.

7.6.4 News Release Distribution

Internal distribution of all news releases PRIOR to external release will be determined by the PIO and/or RC.

7.6.5 Media Escorts

7.6.5.1 When media representatives arrive at the CBOH, they should check-in at the front desk and wait until appropriate staff escorts them to the interview area.

7.6.5.2 Upon completion of the media interview, the appropriate staff will escort the media representative to the front door.

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7.6.5.3 If media would like B-roll to supplement story, please get approval from PIO and/or RC in advance. If approved, in an effort to assure patient privacy (HIPAA), the public health staff member should remain with media representative during the taping of B-roll while inside the facility.

7.6.6 Media Interviews

PIO and/or RC should facilitate the interview by making introductions of involved parties.

7.6.7 News – News Conferences/Events

All news conferences will be approved by the PIO and/or RC and DHD/AA with notifications to the DPH Communications Division Director and the DPH Commissioner.

8.0 SOCIAL MEDIA

Please see CBOH's *Social Media Policy CM-07003*.

9.0 REVISION HISTORY

REVISION #	REVISION DATE	REVISION COMMENTS
	January 5,2016	Initial Issue
1	June 4, 2018	Annual review
2	November 13, 2019	Annual review with revisions
3	May 26, 2022	Reviewed

10.0 RELATED FORMS

None