

## Media Relations

### 342.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy provides guidelines for media releases and media access to scenes of disasters, criminal investigations, emergencies and other law enforcement activities.

### 342.2 RESPONSIBILITIES

The ultimate authority and responsibility for the release of information to the media shall remain with the Chief Probation Officer, however, in situations not warranting immediate notice to the Chief Probation Officer and in situations where the Chief Probation Officer has given prior approval, Managers, Supervisors or other designees of the Chief Probation Officer, may prepare and release information to the media in accordance with this policy and the applicable law.

#### 342.2.1 MEDIA REQUEST

Any media request for information or access to a law enforcement situation shall be referred to the designated Department media representative, or if unavailable, to the first available Supervisor. Before releasing any information to the media, employees shall consider the following:

- (a) At no time shall any employee of this Department make any comment or release any official information to the media without prior approval from the Chief Probation Officer or the designated Department media representative.
- (b) In situations involving multiple law enforcement agencies, every reasonable effort should be made to coordinate media releases with the authorized representative of each involved agency before the release of any information by this Department.
- (c) Under no circumstance should any employee of this Department make any comments to the media regarding any law enforcement incident not involving this Department without prior approval of the Chief Probation Officer.

### 342.3 MEDIA ACCESS

Authorized members of the media shall be provided access to scenes of disasters, criminal investigations, emergencies and other law enforcement activities subject to the following conditions (Pen. Code § 409.5(d)):

- (a) The media representative shall produce valid press credentials that shall be prominently displayed at all times while in areas otherwise closed to the public.
- (b) Media representatives may be prevented from interfering with emergency operations and criminal investigations.
  1. Reasonable efforts should be made to provide a safe staging area for the media that is near the incident and that will not interfere with emergency or criminal investigation operations. All information released to the media should be coordinated through the Chief Probation Officer or other designated spokesperson.

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2. Whenever the presence of media or other aircraft pose a threat to public or officer safety or significantly hampers incident operations, the Supervisor or designee on scene should consider requesting a Temporary Flight Restriction (TFR). All requests for a TFR should be routed through the Chief Probation Officer or designee. The TFR request should include specific information regarding the perimeter and altitude necessary for the incident and should be requested through the appropriate control tower. If the control tower is not known, the Federal Aviation Administration should be contacted. (14 CFR 91.137.)
  - (c) No employee of this Department who is under investigation shall be subjected to media visits or interviews without the consent of the involved employee. (Gov. Code § 3303(e).)
  - (d) Media interviews with individuals who are in custody are not permitted without the approval of the Chief Probation Officer and the express consent of the person in custody or their legal guardian, if applicable.

A tactical operation should be handled in the same manner as a crime scene, except the news media shall be permitted within the outer perimeter of the scene, subject to any restrictions as determined by the Supervisor in charge. Department employees shall not jeopardize a tactical operation to accommodate the news media. All comments to the media shall be coordinated through the Chief Probation Officer or the Chief Probation Officer's designee.

#### **342.4 SCOPE OF INFORMATION SUBJECT TO RELEASE**

At no time shall identifying information pertaining to a juvenile arrestee, victim or witness be released to the media without prior approval of the Yolo County Superior Court, another Court of competent jurisdiction, or federal Court.

Information concerning incidents involving certain sex crimes and other offenses set forth in Government Code section 6254(f) shall be restricted in accordance with applicable statutory provisions.

Identifying information concerning deceased individuals shall not be released to the media until notification of next of kin or otherwise cleared through the Coroner's Office.

##### **342.4.1 RESTRICTED INFORMATION**

It shall be the responsibility of the authorized employee dealing with media requests to ensure that restricted information is not inappropriately released to the media by this Department. When in doubt, authorized and available legal counsel should be consulted.