

**INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES
ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

Policy Number: EA-3

Effective Date: March 1, 2022

Version: 3.0

POLICY TITLE: MEDIA CONTACT

OVERVIEW: The Department of Child Services (DCS) will be responsive and helpful when communicating with the media. Media requests for basic information about general business operations or program overviews may in some circumstances be handled by DCS Local Office Directors (LODs), Program Directors, Regional Managers (RMs), and/or Deputy Directors with prior approval from the Director of Communications or designee. Media requests for information regarding specific cases, policy positions, or critical incidents and requests for interviews will be referred to the Director of Communications.

I. DEFINITIONS

Media: Any means of mass communication including, but not limited to, the internet, newspapers, magazines, radio, podcasts, and television. Media may refer to a group of journalists and others who work in the communications industry.

II. REFERENCES

- A. [EA-5 Constituent Correspondence](#)
- B. [IC 5-14-4: Public Access Counselor](#)

III. STATEMENTS OF PURPOSE

- A. DCS will be transparent and open when communicating with the media while protecting confidential information.
- B. The Director of Communications is to be consulted prior to any DCS employee responding to a media request.
- C. The Director of Communications shall coordinate and approve media interviews.
- D. The Director of Communications will be notified within one (1) hour of a critical event expected to receive significant media attention.
- E. All media inquiries are to be reported to the Director of Communications by email within one (1) business day.
- F. The DCS Legal shall ensure compliance with all Public Access reporting requirements of [IC 5-14-4](#).
- G. All contractors and service providers will have approval from the Director of Communications or designee prior to releasing media that relates to DCS.

IV. PROCEDURE

- A. It is imperative for the DCS communications team to respond in an informative and timely manner to the media and other individuals requesting information. The DCS local office will contact the communications team by email (communication@dcs.in.gov) within one (1) hour of learning of a critical event, regardless of the time of day. Examples of critical events include, but are not limited to:
 - 1. Fatality or near fatality of a child who is in the care of DCS or was previously in the care of DCS,

2. Any other child fatality suspected to be due to Child Abuse or Neglect (CA/N) reported to DCS that may receive public attention in the media,
3. Allegations of CA/N, felony offenses, serious misconduct by DCS staff, volunteers, or DCS providers who serve children,
4. Reports that an employee, a volunteer, or service provider is arrested and/or charged with a crime,
5. Public, media, or legislative inquiry or involvement regarding policy or a case decision,
6. Any significant concern or complaint brought to the attention of DCS by an individual that cannot be resolved at the local level or if calls of a complaint, requests for intervention, or review to central office are anticipated, and

Note: Any significant constituent concern or complaint will be referred to the Constituent Services Representative (see policy [EA-5 Constituent Correspondence](#)).

7. Natural disasters, threats, or other security concerns made to staff or facilities that serve children in the care and custody of DCS.
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- B. When a staff member receives a media call/inquiry, they should gather the basic information, including the reporter's name, organization contact information, story idea, questions, and deadline. No DCS employee may guarantee a response by deadline without prior approval of the Director of Communications or designee.
 - C. No DCS employee shall agree or submit to an interview, on- or off-camera, without prior approval from the Director of Communications or designee.
 - D. The staff member will notify the communications team of the media call within the same business day via email (communication@dcs.in.gov).
 - E. The Director of Communications or designee will coordinate interviews with DCS employees, as appropriate, and may develop talking points in consultation with subject-matter experts prior to the interview.
 - F. In the event a staff member inadvertently responds to a media request, they will notify the communications team within the same business day by email (communication@dcs.in.gov) and telephone.
 - G. Contractors, service providers, or stakeholders that wish to make a media release that relates to DCS will forward the planned release to the communications team a minimum of two (2) weeks prior to release date for approval and will not release without approval.

DATE: February 8, 2022
Noelle Russell, Director of Communications
Department of Child Services