

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

Policy Number: EA-3

Effective Date: October 1, 2008

Version: 2.0

POLICY TITLE: MEDIA CONTACT

OVERVIEW: The Department of Child Services (DCS) will be transparent and open when communicating with the media. Media requests for information about general business operations or program overviews will be handled by DCS Local Office Directors (LODs), Program Directors, Regional Managers (RMs), and/or Deputy Directors after consultation with the Deputy Director of Communications. Media requests regarding specific cases, DCS statistics, DCS policy positions, or child fatalities will be referred to the Deputy Director of Communications, unless directed by the Deputy Director of Communications.

I. DEFINITIONS

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

II. REFERENCES

[IC 5-14-4: Public Access Counselor](#)

III. STATEMENTS OF PURPOSE

- A. DCS will be transparent and open when communicating with the media.
- B. The Deputy Director of Communications is to be consulted prior to responding to all media requests.
- C. The Deputy Director of Communications will be notified within one (1) hour of a critical event.
- D. All routine media inquiries are to be reported to the Deputy Director of Communications in writing within the same business day, e-mail is preferred.
- E. The DCS Office of the General Counsel shall ensure compliance with all Public Access reporting requirements of [IC 5-14-4](#).
- F. All contractors and service providers will have approval from the Deputy Director of Communications prior to releasing media that relates to DCS.

IV. PROCEDURE

- A. It is imperative for the Deputy Director of Communications to respond in an informative and timely manner to the media and other individuals requesting information. The DCS local office will contact the Deputy Director of Communications by both telephone and e-mail 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 that is in the care and supervision of DCS or was previously in the care and custody of DCS,
 - 2. Any other child fatality suspected to be due to Child Abuse or Neglect (CA/N) that is 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 that serve children,

4. Reports that an employee, a volunteer, or service provider is arrested and 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 attention by an individual that DCS services, which cannot be resolved at the local level or where calls of complaint or requests for intervention or review to central office are anticipated,

Note: Any significant constituent concern or complaint will be referred to the Constituent Services Representative. See separate 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.
- B. When a program or DCS LOD, RM, or Deputy Director receives a media call, he/she should gather the basic information, including the reporter's name, organization contact information, what the story is about, what questions the reporter has, and the story deadline.
 - C. The program or DCS LOD, RM, or Deputy Director will notify the Deputy Director of Communications of the media call within the same business day via e-mail.
 - D. The Deputy Director of Communications will coordinate who will respond to the inquiry and may develop any necessary talking points.
 - E. In the event that a program or DCS LOD, RM, or Deputy Director inadvertently responds to a media request, he or she is to notify the Deputy Director of Communications within the same business day via e-mail and telephone.
 - F. Contractors, service providers, or stakeholders that wish to make a media release that relates to DCS will forward release to Deputy Director of Communications a minimum of two (2) weeks prior to release date for approval and will not release without approval.

DATE: 09/05/08

James W. Payne, Director
Department of Child Services

A signed copy is on file.