

# Media Contact Guide

**MAP No. 30-13**

**Effective Date: July 1, 1997**

**Supersedes MAP No. 30-13**

**Dated: July 1, 1995**

## **State of Alaska**

**Department of Health & Social Services**

**Division of Public Assistance**

**FIELD SERVICES**

**MANAGEMENT ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES**

Approved by:

*Rebecca Eames*

Chief of Field Services

Date: July 1, 1997

---

**PURPOSE**

*Establish procedures and guidelines for employee contact with the media.*

---

**BACKGROUND**

Requests of division employees for information and opinions by members of the media have increased. The need of the public to obtain information and the rights of expression of employees must be balanced with the interests of the Division. We need standards and procedures to guide our responses.

---

**GENERAL EXPECTATIONS**

Management's goal is to provide information to the media which is accurate and consistent. This means that Division staff should speak only to what is in their sphere of expertise and level of control. Front line staff, by the nature of their assignments, are often not aware of the broader issues and perspectives. Further, they do not normally have access to comparative statistics. For this reason, media contact is generally handled at the regional and division management level. Management has no desire to limit the involvement of employees. However, each employee will be accountable and responsible for the information they provide, and the opinions they share with the media.

Media requests to attend ATAP orientation can be granted, if management feels the media's presence will not be disruptive to the session and the media agrees to: 1) only observe the session; 2) not bring in any type of recording device; and 3) have no interaction with applicants or clients while in the building. For reasons of client confidentiality, media requests to attend "Work Search/Job Club" meetings cannot be granted.

Controversial political issues, legislative issues, and inter-division or inter-departmental issues must be referred to the Director.

---

**BASIC RULES**

1. Return all calls promptly.
2. If you are contacted and respond at work, it is assumed you are representing the division. If you are contacted and respond outside your work hours and are expressing a personal opinion, make sure you first state this is your own opinion and not necessarily that of the Division or the Administration.

3. Be truthful and objective. If you are unwilling or uncomfortable answering questions, or a particular question, you do not have to respond. Refer the caller to your supervisor or the person authorized to respond.
4. Avoid expressing opinions about policies or procedures unless you have been specifically authorized to do so.
5. Do not express general opinions about the honesty or character of our clients.
6. Be as open as possible; but don't be overly trustful of the reporter's agenda.
7. Provide information in the appropriate context. Complex policies and administrative decisions can be misunderstood if appropriate detail and background is not provided.
8. Prepare before responding. It is OK to ask to call back later.
9. Never hesitate to answer "I don't know." Don't try to answer a question if you don't have the facts.
10. Never discuss a specific case without a specific written authorization from the client involved.
11. Never discuss a State personnel issue.

The "Media Training" packet attached provides information and advice to help ensure a positive outcome. Review it prior to all interviews with the media.

---

## **PROCEDURES**

Non-management employees should take the following steps before contacting, or when contacted by the media, regarding division business.

1. Try to find out exactly what information is being sought, for what purpose, and by what organization.
2. Find out the timeframe for response and make sure you know the name and phone number of the media representative.

3. Advise the media representative someone will get back with them once it is determined who will address the issue.
4. Immediately contact your supervisor, manager, or designated member of division management, through the normal chain of command if time permits. Request approval and work time to respond, or help determine who is best suited to respond for the Division.
5. If you are authorized to respond for the Division, review your information with management to ensure it is accurate and in context.
6. If it is decided someone else will respond, be sure to provide that person with all the information you have obtained. Timely response is important.
7. The person who responds must complete a "Press Contact Summary Form" and immediately forward it to the Director with a copy to manager.