



**DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS  
MONTANA STATE PRISON  
OPERATIONAL PROCEDURE**

Procedure No.: MSP 1.1.8	Subject: <b>MEDIA RELATIONS</b>
Reference: DOC Policy No. 1.1.8	Page 1 of 4 plus one attachment
Effective Date: December 1, 1996	Revised: August 22, 2017
Signature / Title: /s/ Michael Fletcher / Warden	

## **I. PURPOSE**

Montana State Prison will maintain positive and informative relationships with the public, the media, and other agencies with related functions. It will provide timely, complete, and accurate information on Department operations, accomplishments, critical incidents, and emergencies in compliance with all statutes that govern confidentiality and public information by balancing the public's right to know with the individual's right to privacy.

## **II. DEFINITIONS**

Public Information Officer (PIO) – An official spokesperson designated by the administrator to provide day-to-day facility or program information to the public and news media.

News Media Representative – a qualified and properly identified representative of a newspaper, magazine, national/ international news service, and radio/ television station, or other individual seeking information for publication.

News Release – An official Department/MSP written statement distributed to the news media to inform the public and provide media coverage related to Department/MSP business.

Inmate – any person under the supervision of MSP.

News Media Plan – the written procedure that guides the PIO and/or designee in their day-to-day efforts to work effectively with the news media.

## **III. PROCEDURE**

### **A. Media Relations/General Issues**

1. The PIO will develop a media plan and a process for establishing and maintaining working relationships with the public and the news media.
2. When developing the media plan, the PIO will consult with the Department PIO to ensure that all plans are consistent.
3. The PIO will handle the day-to-day public and media relations duties of MSP, subject to the guidance and direction of the Warden, and in keeping with the Department and Governor's media plans.
4. The PIO must provide current and factual verbal and written information to the media; however, there may be times when the information that can be immediately released is limited due to confidentiality, necessary notification, safety, and security. In those cases, every effort will be made to provide the public and media with as much information as possible and to establish times when additional information may be available.

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## **B. Media Access to MSP**

1. News media representatives may be approved to access MSP, its personnel, and inmates at reasonable times of the day and with proper notice. Final approval for access rests with the Warden or designee.
2. Media requests for authorization to enter MSP will be forwarded to the PIO.
3. Media persons requesting access to MSP will be required to pass security clearance requirements in accordance with *MSP Procedure 3.1.5, Entrance Procedures & Detainment of Non-Offenders*, and complete a *Media Access Information form* (attachment A).
4. The PIO will initiate criminal background checks on the person(s) requesting access, for security clearance. Only media persons who receive a security clearance may be allowed access to MSP.
5. Written requests by media to interview inmates must be processed in accordance with *DOC Policy 3.3.4, Media Access to Offenders*.

## **C. Media Spokesperson**

1. The Warden and PIO are the authorized MSP spokespersons.
2. Staff will refer all media inquiries about official MSP business to the PIO or Warden. MSP staff will not comment to the news media unless specifically requested to do so by the Warden or the PIO.
3. MSP staff is not authorized to publish or release original printed materials developed by MSP or the Department without prior approval from the Warden or the Director.
4. MSP staff who wish to speak to the media as private citizens, not as representatives of the prison, must make those media contacts during off-duty hours, and must make it clear to the media that they are representing their own personal views, not those of MSP or the Department.

## **D. Media Calls/Inquiries**

1. Media calls will be directed to the PIO, who will respond promptly, accurately, openly, and honestly. The following will be taken into consideration by the PIO or Warden when responding to inquiries from the media:
  - a. responses will be confined to providing information about the prison. Generally comments should not be made that pertain to official MSP activities, or operations and events at other department facilities/programs;
  - b. during an emergency, all public and media access to MSP may be limited. The Warden will instruct the PIO to periodically brief all media during emergencies. During emergency situations any media-briefing center must be established away from the location of tactical operations;
  - c. to maximize the flow of accurate and timely information about the prison, all requests for information will be answered, unless there is reason to question the legitimacy of the inquiry, an individual's right of privacy, or there are legitimate security issues; and
  - d. If the PIO has a question about releasing information to the press or public, the best course of action is to seek the advice of the Warden, Department PIO, or the Director's office. In cases where there may be a significant delay in responding to an inquiry, the PIO will explain the reasons for the delay and in the interim only provide information that can be released.

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### **E. Release of Information**

1. Under normal circumstances, news media inquiries will be directed to and handled by the PIO. The following are some general guidelines relative to the release of information to the media and the public:
  - a. information about Non-restricted facility operations, policies, and procedures will only be released through the PIO or Warden;
  - b. the PIO is responsible for releasing information pertaining to MSP. The Department PIO may advise and assist the PIO in matters relating to national and international news media requests for access to, or information about a program. Any contact from a national or international news representative must be reported to the Department PIO as soon as possible. If a local reporter's inquiry involves an issue that is deemed controversial or impacts the Department, the Department PIO must be contacted as soon as possible;
  - c. MSP employees may not make official statements on behalf of the Montana State Prison unless authorized to do so by the PIO, Warden, or Department Director. Staff will refer all media inquiries about official MSP business to the PIO or Warden;
  - d. the PIO is responsible for notifying the media in the immediate area of news coverage about newsworthy incidents representing the complete range of prison operations and activities. The content of such notifications should be provided to the Department PIO on an as-needed basis, or in the event of an emergency, at the earliest possible opportunity; and
  - e. after normal duty hours, all media inquiries will be directed to the Shift Commander, who in turn will contact the PIO. If an inquiry pertains to an issue that may affect the entire prison, or generate significant media coverage, the PIO must contact the Warden and the Department PIO.

### **F. Typical Information Release Requirements**

1. The PIO will provide accurate and complete information to the media on a regular basis. Efforts to inform the public (through a wide range of opportunities including but not limited to the media) about constructive correctional programs must be done on a routine basis in order for the public to be better informed about MSP activities.
2. Media requests for inmate information will be honored in a timely manner. Inmate information must be released in accordance with *DOC Policy 1.5.6, Offenders Records Access and Release*. If there is a question about the legitimacy of an inquiry or if there is an issue of confidentiality, requests should be referred to the Warden, Department PIO, or to Department Legal Counsel.
3. The identity of a deceased inmate will be withheld until next-of-kin have been notified, or 24 hours following death, whichever occurs first.
4. Information regarding psychiatric, medical, or juvenile criminal histories of inmates cannot be released under law.
5. Photographs of inmates may only be copied by news organizations when the Warden determines that there is no security risk involved.
6. Provided there is no direct threat to security, inmate interviews may only be authorized with written authorization by the inmate, and when appropriate, the inmate's attorney.
7. Media inquiries regarding staff must be referred to the Warden, who must consult with Department

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Legal office prior to releasing any information. Staff confidentiality is of utmost importance. Names of staff will not be included in news releases without staff consent.

8. Other information may be released to the news media at the discretion of the PIO. All news releases will be forwarded to the PIO for review.
9. In the event of an emergency the PIO will distribute releases to news organizations throughout the state.
10. The PIO will maintain a file of information released to the media. This file is available for review by media representatives who must schedule appointments to review these files during normal working hours.

#### **G. News Clippings/ Videotaped News Coverage**

1. When possible, the PIO should record radio or television news coverage involving MSP or the Department. The PIO should forward these recordings, and any newspaper clippings pertaining to MSP and Department activities, to the Department PIO.

#### **H. Responsiveness to the Media**

1. The Administration of MSP encourages a better public understanding of MSP program goals and operational procedures. This is accomplished, in part, as follows:
  - a. providing prompt, complete responses to all correspondence and other requests from the media;
  - b. participating in organizations and meetings that assure cooperation with other criminal justice agencies in information gathering, exchange, and standardization. This includes strategic and contingency planning at federal, state, and local levels;
  - c. providing access through structured tours in compliance with *MSP Procedure 1.1.10, MSP/MCE Tours*; and
  - d. meeting on a regular basis with media staff and editorial boards to address areas of mutual concern.

#### **I. Film/ Movie Making Access to MSP**

1. Inquiries about access to MSP by filmmakers, writers for non-news magazines, and others, will be directed to the Warden or PIO. Permission for access by these individuals will be considered on a case-by-case basis after consultation between the Warden and PIO, and discussion with the Department PIO. These inquiries are subject to policy and procedures regarding inmate confidentiality, and must attest to the credentials of the persons involved and the authenticity of the proposed project.

### **IV. CLOSING**

Questions concerning this operational procedure will be directed to the MSP PIO.

### **V. ATTACHMENT**

Media Access Information Form

attachment A

# MSP Media Access Information Form

## Request for Access/Information

Media Person: \_\_\_\_\_ Affiliate of: \_\_\_\_\_

Called on: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ (Date) \_\_\_\_\_ (Time)

Regarding a Request For: \_\_\_\_\_

Does the story involve inmates?      Yes      No  
If so, who? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Consent forms for inmate interviews?      Received:      Yes      No  
Death sentenced inmate – Attorney consent form?      Received:      Yes      No

Does the story involve staff?      Yes      No  
If so, who? \_\_\_\_\_

Photos/Film Footage being requested?      Yes      No  
How much?      Number of photos: \_\_\_\_\_      Film footage: \_\_\_\_\_

Requested duration of visit: \_\_\_\_\_

All equipment requesting to bring to MSP: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Number of Media Person(s) requesting to visit: \_\_\_\_\_

Name/position: \_\_\_\_\_ SS Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name/position: \_\_\_\_\_ SS Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name/position: \_\_\_\_\_ SS Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

Media Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Fax: \_\_\_\_\_