

## Public Information

### 212.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Sets forth policies, procedures, and responsibility for releasing information (1) to the media and (2) to the public through speeches, presentations, publications, or seminars; describes responsibilities and authority of the Office of Public Affairs.

### 212.2 APPLICABILITY

This section applies to all Departmental employees, volunteers, and contracted agency staff.

### 212.3 POLICY

It is the Probation Department's policy to carry out a continuing program of public information to foster public understanding of, and support for, departmental programs, and to recognize the obligation of the media to publicly report the activities of the criminal justice system.

The Chief Probation Officer (CPO), the Assistant Chief Probation Officer (ACPO), the Deputy Chief Probation Officers (DCPO), and the Public Safety Group Public Information Officer (PSG PIO) are the official spokespersons for the Department.

### 212.4 COMMUNICATIONS WITH NEWS MEDIA

- (a) The CPO, in conjunction with the PSG PIO is responsible for preparing releases or other communications to the press, radio, or TV relative to departmental affairs likely to be of public interest or concern.
- (b) Employees acting in their official capacity shall not communicate with news media representatives without specific authorization from the CPO or his designee.
- (c) Employees contacted by the media shall immediately refer all such contacts to the PSG PIO via their chain of command. The CPO or PSG PIO will determine the nature of the information needed and will either respond directly or request a response from a knowledgeable person within the department through the CPO or ACPO Office. In the PSG Public Information Officer's absence, all such contacts shall be referred to the CPO or ACPO. In the absence of the CPO or ACPO, contacts shall be referred to the appropriate Deputy Chief Probation Officer.
- (d) Any employee having an authorized media contact shall brief the CPO, ACPO and PSG Public Information Officer as to the nature and content of the contact as soon as possible thereafter.

#### 212.4.1 MEDIA ACCESS TO INSTITUTIONS

News media representatives shall be granted entry into the juvenile institutions upon authorization by the CPO, ACPO or, in his or her absence, the appropriate Deputy Chief. The PSG PIO shall be notified of such a request.

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#### 212.4.2 RELEASE OF INFORMATION - JUVENILE FIELD AND INSTITUTIONAL SERVICES

When the name of a minor is public knowledge and a petition has been filed, the following information may be disclosed upon authorization of the CPO or ACPO:

- the allegation(s)
- whether or not the minor is detained
- the probable date of the court hearing

No other information may be divulged.

#### 212.4.3 RELEASE OF INFORMATION - ADULT FIELD SERVICES AND INSTITUTIONS

While a presentence investigation is in progress or a violation of probation is being evaluated pending a return to court, employees may neither discuss details of a case nor speculate or comment on a probable recommendation. A completed court report, unless the court orders to the contrary, is a public document for 60 days following the hearing (1203.5 PC). During that time, if authorized by CPO or ACPO, staff may disclose any information included in the report and answer inquiries regarding the fact of the court disposition. Court orders and commitment papers are public record and may be quoted.

#### 212.4.4 MOVIES, TV, INTERVIEW, ETC.

No still or motion pictures, including television or voice recordings which may reveal the identity of a minor in court-ordered placement or detention, may be made without the permission of the Supervising Judge of the Juvenile Court. No still or motion pictures, including television or voice recordings which may reveal the identity of an adult offender, may be used without the permission of the individual being recorded.

#### 212.4.5 RIDE ALONG PROGRAM

In order for media members or media crews to participate in a ride-along with on-duty Probation Department officers, a Waiver and Release Form and a Supplemental Media Agreement Form must be signed. No member of the media will be allowed to participate in a ride-along without having signed these consent forms.

#### 212.4.6 COMMENTS ON COURT ACTION

Staff must not engage in public discussion of the merits of a court order or judgment or other nonfactual, philosophical issues involved in a case.

#### 212.4.7 PUBLIC APPEARANCE BY EMPLOYEES

All requests for the appearance of a departmental employee before a radio, television, large audience, or local community group, wherein the employee is identified as a representative of the Probation Department, must be directed to the CPO or his designee.

#### 212.4.8 PUBLIC APPEARANCES OR PUBLICATION BY EMPLOYEES

Any employee who intends to write for publication or make speeches (in person or through the media) on work-related topics, or is to be identified as a Probation Department employee in

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any public forum, must have prior approval of the Chief Probation Officer or his designee. This procedure will promote accurate portrayal of the Department and its policies and procedures, and includes anything developed on County time, at County expense, or with County materials. This administrative review is designed to avoid possible conflict of interest, the misuse of position or authority, dissemination of inaccurate or misleading information, misrepresentation of departmental positions, or breach of confidentiality.

An employee does not need departmental approval to make public use of materials under these circumstances:

- the materials were created on personal time at personal expense and
- the materials are not represented as being endorsed or approved by the Department, and
- the employee is not identified as a Departmental employee.

#### 212.4.9 SPECIAL INCIDENTS

Any employee learning of an incident or event which could reflect adversely on the County or the Probation Department should report the facts to the appropriate Deputy Chief Probation Officer as soon as possible. In urgent or critical circumstances, the employee may bypass usual channels and report the matter directly to the Office of the Chief Probation Officer.

#### 212.4.10 INFORMATION ABOUT CLIENTS OF THE DEPARTMENT

Except for sharing information on adult cases with persons designated in Section 1203.10 of the Penal Code and with those persons or agencies authorized by court or departmental manual provisions, case information about clients of the department is not to be given to any nonemployee without the review and approval of the CPO or designee. (See Section on "Confidentiality")

#### 212.4.11 PERSONNEL CLEARANCES

Requests for information about any employee of the Probation Department will be referred to the Human Resources.

#### 212.4.12 SPEAKER'S BUREAU

Requests for departmental speakers must be routed to the Probation Department's Human Resources Office. A standard form will be forwarded to the applicant; upon its return, the applicant will be notified if the request has been approved and, if so, the name of the speaker. If possible, a two week notice before the speaking date should be given.

#### 212.4.13 REQUESTS FROM PUBLIC

Requests from the public for information which do not apply to specific cases are handled as described below.

- A. Job Applicants: Persons making application for positions are to be referred to Probation Department's Human Resources Office. Students applying for field observation or internship experiences are to be referred to Human Resources.

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- B. Voluntary Services/Donations: Any persons who calls or a visiting relative who wants to volunteer part-time services or make a donation are to be referred to the Volunteers in Probation (VIP) Coordinator.
- C. General and Statistical Information: Persons contacting the Probation Department for general or statistical information are to be referred to the DCPO Office.
- D. Interviews: Individuals or groups contacting the department with requests for interviews (not related to specific cases) with official employees are to be referred to the DCPO office for clearance and approval.
- E. Academic: Students contacting the department for class-oriented information will be referred to the appropriate Division Chief for assistance.
- F. Institutional Visits: Requests to visit a specific institution will be referred to the Division Chief of the institution concerned.
- G. Juvenile Hearings: Requests to sit in on a Juvenile Court hearing will be referred to the Juvenile Court Coordinator.
- H. Research and Projects: Persons requesting permission to do research projects using departmental statistics, personnel, or clients must mail a detailed, written proposal to the Assistant Chief Probation Officer.