

	Media Relations	Corporate Policy & Procedures Manual
		Number: III-85 Date Approved June 17, 2019
Approved by: Chief Communications Officer	Date Effective June 17, 2019	
	Next Review June 2022	

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide direction and support for staff and physicians who are responding to media questions in order to ensure that our organization’s mission, policies, and practices are represented in a credible and consistent manner.

Media is a powerful communication tools with the capacity to have far reaching impact on an organization’s reputation; both positive and negative. This policy informs employees and leadership about the role of the Communications Department in supporting and monitoring these activities.

Policy Statement

Covenant Health is committed to transparent communication through the engagement of reputable media organizations. The Communications department is responsible for ensuring media activity conducted on behalf of the organization is undertaken appropriately and effectively and in alignment with all applicable policies, procedures and laws pertaining to privacy. All staff, physicians, volunteers, students and any other persons shall comply with the requirements identified in the policy.

Individuals shall not respond to any Covenant Health-related media request for information without first consulting with the Communications Department and receiving appropriate approvals.

Covenant Health does not regulate, restrict, or direct the private or personal views or opinions of individuals while they are not at work and/or not on Covenant Health premises. When making public comment, it is the responsibility of the individual to clearly indicate when the comments are being made in an official capacity on behalf of Covenant Health or, alternatively, when the comments are personal or private views and opinions or on behalf of an organization or profession.

Media personnel are required to make prior arrangements with Covenant Health Communications Department before entering Covenant Health facilities and before engaging staff or physicians.

Principles

Covenant Health has a proactive media strategy with the goal of raising public awareness, understanding and support, managing issues, and recognizing and engaging Covenant Health team members. The Covenant Health Communications Department strives to build and maintain open, honest relationships with members of the media.

Applicability

This policy and procedures applies to all Covenant Health facilities, staff, physicians, volunteers, students and any other persons acting on behalf of Covenant Health.

Responsibility

The CEO, or other designated senior leader, assumes overall accountability for communications activity.

Covenant Health Communications department will:

- Ensure media requests and information-sharing are handled in a courteous,

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accurate and timely manner.

- Ensure confidentiality is maintained as directed by Covenant Health privacy policy and procedure(s) and as stipulated by legislation.
- Provide official comment from the organization, site or program to a spokesperson designated by a member of the Senior Leadership Team. Chief Communications Officer, Director of Communications or designate within Communications may respond to basic inquiries about operations, issues, announcements, contact information, etc. or act as a conduit for written statements from subject matter experts.
- Co-ordinate comment and interviews on behalf of the organization.
- Provide regular training, advice, and support to ensure leaders and official spokespeople are prepared to engage in media activity as required.
- Provide expertise to directors/managers/account managers and staff who have questions regarding applying or interpreting this policy.
- Provide ongoing issue-related media training to the designated spokesperson, depending on the serious nature of the issue or topic.

Covenant Health staff, physicians and volunteers will:

- Forward any and all media information requests to the Covenant Health Communications Department.
- Notify Covenant Health Communications Department immediately if media appears on-site without prior arrangements - directly or through the site administration or Manager on Call or switchboard (weekends and after office hours only).
- Notify Covenant Health Communications Department of all media activity and coverage involving Covenant Health for tracking and issues management purposes.
- Complete and sign media consent forms when participating in interviews or events coordinated by Covenant Health.
- Demonstrate compliance with this policy and procedure by adhering to the requirements identified herein.

Media are required to:

- Request and receive permission from Covenant Health Communications department or a facility leader to record images or sound within a Covenant Health facility or on its property.

Procedure

- All staff, physicians and volunteers must notify and consult with Covenant Health Communications Department before responding to media inquiries/questions. Contact information media@covenanthealth.ca or via media on-call at 780.394.7027.
- In cases of media activity that does not fall into the category of official comment from the organization, site or program on an issue, spokespeople are required to notify Covenant Health Communications Department of the media activity before the event.

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Definitions

Appropriate Approvals – The need for approval is determined by the accountabilities in the individual’s position and/or as determined and agreed upon with the supervisor.

Designated spokesperson – The designated spokesperson is an employee identified by Covenant Health leadership to speak on behalf of the organization, providing official comment on an issue, topic or program. A media spokesperson can be identified before or after media calls.

Issue – A controversial or sensitive topic that could negatively impact Covenant Health’s reputation or damage the organization’s relationship with its stakeholders.

Issues Management – Having expertise, processes and policies in place to manage issues that could negatively impact Covenant Health’s reputation.

Media – includes, but is not limited to, traditional media (e.g. radio, TV, newspapers, magazines) and non-traditional media (e.g. Twitter, YouTube, Face book, blogs, etc.) engaged in coverage of Covenant Health’s news, issues and developments.

Media Consent Forms – Legal documents that must be signed by all physicians, staff, volunteers, residents and patients before participating in any media relations activity (photos, audio and video recording) at all Covenant Health sites.

Official Comment – approved key messages developed with the support of Covenant Health Communications Department and used as a guideline for responding to media. In some instances, a written statement may be provided in lieu of an interview.

Timely – Respecting a reporter’s deadline—including responding to the request with initial contact as soon as possible, confirming timelines with the reporter and following through to meet or adjust those timelines as necessary. If someone who is not the appropriate person receives a media call, informing the reporter immediately and providing the contact for the Communications Department.

Tracking – All media coverage Covenant Health receives is recorded, linking it to organizational priorities and reported to Covenant Health Leadership and the Board of Directors. It is used to help inform them about what is happening at all the sites and monitor issues.

Related Documents

- [Our Commitment to Ethical Integrity](#)
- [Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and Regulations](#)
- [Health Information Act](#)
- [Social Media Policy](#)

References

Previous Version Date(s) July 15, 2013