



How you want to be treated.

Approved Date: May 1, 2000
Revised Date: August 8, 2007

POLICY

Providence Health Care is committed to open communications with representatives of the media within the limits of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* as it pertains to patient and employee confidentiality.

It is the role of the chief communications officer to balance the organization's responsibility as a source of information about health care and Providence Health Care services with the need to protect the privacy of our patients, residents, clients, their families and our employees.

All media inquiries and requests for interviews pertaining to PHC patients, residents, volunteers, staff, services, facilities, governance or administration are to be referred to Communications & Public Affairs or coordinated with Communications & Public Affairs prior to a response.

Permission for interviews, photography or access to PHC facilities may not be given to any member of the media unless it has been cleared through Communications and Public Affairs.

Media are permitted inside PHC facilities only if escorted by a Communications & Public Affairs representative or designate who has prior approval from communications. Media may be permitted outside of PHC facilities unless their activities obstruct access to the facility or cause a disturbance.

In accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, details about an individual patient or resident can be released to the media only with the signed consent of the patient, family or adult guardian.

Other agencies operating from PHC, e.g., BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS or any foundation, must obtain clearance from the chief communications officer in advance of any interview or media function occurring in a PHC facility.

All news releases and other written information for release to the media, including those issued by other agencies operating from PHC, must be routed through and approved by Communications & Public Affairs.

Staff interviewed by media on their own time, as private citizens and not as representatives of PHC, may not reference their positions with PHC, or engage in interviews on or within PHC property.

Letters to the Editor on behalf of PHC or by an individual wishing to identify him or herself as an employee of PHC are subject to the same requirements. Personal letters cannot be sent on PHC letterhead or use similar identification.

PROCEDURE

All staff members:

- Refer all calls from the media, regardless of the nature of the request, to Communications & Public Affairs, who will determine the nature of the request and recommend an appropriate course of action.
- Please note: Communications and Public Affairs staff are on-call for media inquiries 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year via the media pager at 604-202-2012. Communications staff are available to provide advice, counsel and training for any employee or physician in an interview situation and will attend interviews upon request.
- Notify Communications & Public Affairs promptly if situations or patient care issues arise that might generate media interest, either positively or negatively.
- Check to see if a reporter, photographer or camera operator inside a PHC facility is accompanied by a Communications and Public Affairs representative or approved designate. If none is present, the staff member should alert communications by phone or pager. Outside PHC facilities, there is no need for staff to follow up unless the presence of media is interfering with access to the facility or causing a disturbance.
- Do not engage in casual conversation with media representatives. An “off the record” remark may still be reported and even informal conversation can be used in print or on the air.

Communications staff member or designate will coordinate all information released to the media on behalf of PHC including:

- issuing news releases
- recommending an appropriate response to media enquiries
- authorizing photography
- providing written, electronic and/or photographic data for media use
- acting as official spokesperson when designated

Communications staff member or designate:

- will accompany all media personnel visiting PHC facilities (includes reporters, television camera operators and photographer)
- should be present during any interview with a patient, resident, staff member, physician or volunteer
- will inform the appropriate security personnel and appropriate operations leader in advance of any visits by media to PHC facilities

- will obtain written consent for photography or interviews with patients and residents (written consent for photography and interviews is not required for visitors, family staff or physicians — however, anyone interviewed inside a facility should be made aware he or she is being interviewed or photographed and given the opportunity to accept or decline)

REFERENCE

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act