

Media Relations

1. Introduction

Providence Health Care (PHC) 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.

PHC balances its responsibility as a source of information about health care and PHC services with the need to protect the privacy of our patients, residents, their families, and our staff.

1.1. Purpose

The Media Relations policy addresses PHC's interaction with the free press, and ensures this balance is preserved.

1.2. Scope

This policy applies to all PHC [Staff](#), Foundation representatives, programs, services, research agencies and other individuals, organizations, and parties that are located at PHC sites.

2. Policy

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 and Public Affairs or coordinated with Communications and 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 and 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*, PHC will ensure patient/resident/family privacy and confidentiality at all times. Details about an individual patient or resident may only be released to the media if there is a signed consent of the patient, family or adult guardian.

Other agencies operating from PHC, e.g., B.C. Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS or any Foundation, must obtain clearance from PHC Communications & Public Affairs in advance of any interview or media function occurring in a PHC facility.

All news releases, public statements representing PHC and other written information for release to the media or formal release to the public, including those issued by other agencies operating from PHC, must be routed through and approved by Communications and Public Affairs and/or comply

with other existing PHC policies (for example, relevant to social media communications, the communications need to comply with the PHC Social Media Policy and PHC Social Media Guidelines).

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, and must make it clear they are not speaking as representatives of PHC.

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.

3. Responsibilities

3.1. All Staff Members

- Refer all calls from the media, regardless of the nature of the request, to Communications and Public Affairs, who will determine the nature of the request and recommend an appropriate course of action.

Communications and Public Affairs staff are on-call for media inquiries 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year (Cell # 604-312-3547). 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 and 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.

3.2. Leader, Communications 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

3.3. Communications Staff Member or Designate

- Will accompany all media personnel visiting PHC facilities. This includes reporters, television camera operators and photographers.
- Should be present during any interview with a patient, resident, staff member, physician or volunteer.
- Will inform the appropriate Security Services personnel and appropriate Patient Care Manager in advance of any visits by media representatives 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.

4. Compliance

All staff members are responsible for adhering to this policy and monitoring their activities in accordance with the policy. Staff members may warn others if they observe a violation of this policy. Failure by staff to comply with this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment, services or privileges.

5. Supporting Documents

5.1. Related Policies

[Social Media](#)

5.2. Guidelines/Procedures/Forms

[BC Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act \(FIPPA\)](#)
[Social Media Guidelines](#)

6. Definitions

“Staff” means all employees (including management and leadership), Medical Staff Members (including physicians, midwives, and dentists), Nurse Practitioners, residents, fellows and trainees, health care professionals, students, volunteers, contractors and other service providers.