

Office of the State Public Defender Administrative Policies

Subject: Media Policy	Policy No.: 230
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1.0 POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for the Office of the State Public Defender's (OPD or the agency) response to media inquiries.

The agency will:

- Respond to media inquiries in a timely, appropriate, and professional manner;
- Give all members of the media equal access to public information;
- Do its best to ensure that all information is accurate and up-to-date;
- Uphold the constitutional right of all Montanans to know what their government is doing on their behalf; and
- Take into account the constitutional right of individuals to privacy, and state and federal laws that mandate confidentiality in specific situations.

OPD Policy 535 provides guidance about whether specific information is public or private. Any employee who has questions should contact the Central Services Division Administrator at 496-6080.

2.0 PROCEDURES/REQUIREMENTS

2.1 Media Inquiries

The director, division administrators, regional deputy public defenders and managing attorneys may give interviews to or respond to media requests for information. They may delegate this responsibility to other employees on specific projects, issues or topics as appropriate.

All questions concerning OPD policy should be forwarded to the Central Services Division Administrator prior to responding.

Anyone who responds to a media inquiry should notify their supervisor. Supervisors will assess the interaction and notify division administrators and/or the director as appropriate. The notification should include:

- The reporter's name, affiliation, and phone number;
- The date/time of the contact;
- The topic of the reporter's call; and
- A brief synopsis of the employee's response.

2.2 News Releases and Press Conferences

All news releases and press conferences must be approved by the Central Services Division Administrator or the Director prior to release or scheduling.

2.3 Publications

State agencies are required by law to send an electronic copy of all publications to the State Library Publications Center Coordinator.

All agency publications must include:

- Cost disclosure information as required in Section 18-7-306, MCA (provided by the Department of Administration Print and Mail Services office);
- An accessibility statement: "Alternative accessible formats of this publication will be provided by request. For further information call xxx-xxxx or TTY 711."

3.0 CROSS-REFERENCE GUIDE

Montana Constitution Article II, Sections 9 (right to know) and 10 (privacy)
2-6-101, MCA et seq. Public Records
OPD Policy 535, Release of Information

4.0 CLOSING

Questions about this policy should be directed to:

Office of the State Public Defender
Central Services Division
44 West Park
Butte, MT 59701

Phone: 406-496-6080