DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

Policy Number: 101.010
Title: Information Program and Dissemination
Effective Date: 6/5/18

PURPOSE: To establish guidelines for providing responses to information requests and educating and informing the public, media, and staff. The department provides information on programs and activities to the public, media and department staff. The communications office is responsible for the development and implementation of an internal and external information program to inform and educate the public, media, and staff about the programs and activities of the department. The communications office develops and publishes newsletters, brochures, the public website, social media content, and other printed and electronic media materials; works with department managers in creating informational materials; and develops and disseminates news releases/advisories.

APPLICABILITY: Minnesota Department of Corrections (DOC); department-wide

DEFINITIONS:
Public – media, citizens, government entities, the legislature, corrections-affiliated organizations, criminal justice system professionals, and other constituent groups.

PROCEDURES:
A. General guidelines
1. Dissemination of written or verbal information to and from the department's administration must normally follow the chain of command.

2. Managers must be responsible for circulating department written statements to appropriate staff, posting statements on established bulletin boards, or presenting them at staff meetings.

3. The department responds to all reasonable inquiries and letters received within seven working days of receipt. If more time is required to respond appropriately, department staff must notify the requester stating when a full response will be made.

4. The department must respond to informational surveys within the time limit set by the requester, if possible, or the requester must be informed that the deadline may not be met and when to expect a response. The communications office serves as the central contact point for informational surveys (see Procedure F.3, below).

5. Public information materials developed by the communications office must be made available to staff for use in their public education efforts.

6. News media contact guidelines are contained in Policy 101.310, "Media Contacts."

7. External information products must not include offender names, or offenders photographed in an identifiable manner.

8. Photographs of DOC staff members for the Hotline newsletter, external website, internal website, or social media, whether taken by the communications department or submitted by staff, must be approved for use via a signed Staff Media Release form (link attached) by the staff members depicted in the photo.

9. The communications office tracks media storied involving the DOC and informs the appropriate staff.

B. News releases/advisories

1. The communications office issues news releases/advisories as department events/programs dictate. Only the communications office, and not facilities or other units, have the authority to issue news releases.

2. The communications office disseminates news releases/advisories to appropriate media including newspapers, television, and radio. Appropriate releases must also be posted on iShare and the department external website.

C. Newsletters

1. The department newsletter is published monthly, if possible, and includes upcoming events, news in corrections, training opportunities, and job openings. The communications office distributes the newsletter via iShare and e-mail.

2. Individual central office units may publish newsletters if each is reviewed and approved by the communications office and the applicable division head.
   a) Internal newsletters may be published at correctional facilities when approved by the warden/superintendent or his/her designee.
   b) External newsletters published by correctional facilities must be approved by the communications office (except offender newspapers).

D. Reports

1. The communications office must review and approve all department reports that may be viewed by the public or other entities prior to dissemination.

2. Managers are responsible for submitting non legislatively-mandated reports to the legislature as defined by Minn. Stat. § 3.302.

E. Websites

1. iShare – the communications office uses iShare to disseminate public information to staff including newsletters, reports, fact sheets, news releases, and other public information materials created by communications staff.

2. Public website – the communications office ensures the public website is current, timely, and accurate.

F. Other communications office functions

1. The communications office develops brochures, fact sheets, briefings, and talking points concerning department activities, programs, and issues. The communications office must annually update the materials with input from department managers.

2. News clips

a) The communications office monitors daily metropolitan newspapers.
b) Pertinent articles must be routed to appropriate staff.
c) An electronic clipping service monitors greater Minnesota newspapers for articles about department programs and issues.
d) The communications office monitors and files appropriate electronic clips.

3. Surveys
a) The communications office coordinates all department responses to surveys.
b) All facilities/staff receiving surveys must contact communications office staff for direction about providing a response.
c) Communications office staff must ensure that research unit staff are involved in responding to surveys when appropriate.

INTERNAL CONTROLS:

A. News releases are posted to the internal and external DOC websites.

B. Communications staff track media requests electronically.

C. Media involving the DOC is retained electronically.

D. Communications staff maintains a spreadsheet of all documents updated annually.

E. Signed offender and staff photo/video releases are retained electronically.

ACA STANDARDS: 4-4019, 4-4020, 4-4021, 4-JCF-6G-02, 2-CO-1A-25 through 2-CO-1A-27-1, 4-APPFS-3A-29

REFERENCES: Policy 101.120, "Legislative Reports"
Policy 101.310, "Media Contacts"
Minn. Stat. §§ 241.01, 3.195; and 3.302, subd.3

REPLACES: Policy 101.010, "Information Program and Dissemination," 8/2/16.
All facility policies, memos, or other communications whether verbal, written, or transmitted by electronic means regarding this topic.

ATTACHMENTS: Staff Media Release Form (on iShare)

APPROVALS:
Deputy Commissioner, Facility Services
Deputy Commissioner, Community Services
Assistant Commissioner, Facility Services
Assistant Commissioner, Operations Support