



PUBLIC INFORMATION

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I. Purpose

The purpose of this Written Directive is to provide guidelines and establish procedures concerning the operation of the public information function.

II. Policy

It shall be the policy of the University of Maryland, Baltimore Police Force (UMBPF) for all members to adhere to the guidelines for the dissemination of information as described in this Written Directive.

III. News Media

A. Media Privileges

The UMBPF recognizes all valid identification from local, national or international news organizations. Any questions of validity shall be referred to the UMB Office of Communications and Public Affairs.

B. Media Access

All accredited news media representatives shall have reasonable access to members but shall not be allowed to interfere with the police mission as stated later in the WD.

C. Sharing Information

Members shall not make any statements involving active investigations without the express permission of the Chief of Police or designee. Further information is provided later in the WD.

IV. Public Information

A. The Public Information Officer

1. The Chief of Police or designee will serve as the Public Information Officer for the Agency; however, the University's Office of Communications and Public Affairs should be considered the prime source of all information about the UMBPF.

2. The UMBPF will coordinate with the Office of Communications and Public Affairs regarding all news releases for uniformity and consistency purposes. The responsibilities of the public information officer include:
 - a. Assisting news personnel in covering routine and specific news stories;
 - b. Responding to news media inquiries, in person, by telephone, or email, and being available for on-call responses to the news media;
 - c. Arranging for and conducting news conferences as required or requested;
 - d. Preparing news releases in coordination with the University's Office of Communications and Public Affairs;
 - e. Assisting with critical situations within the UMBPF as the situations arise;
 - f. Coordinating the release of information concerning confidential Agency investigations and operations; and
 - g. Releasing information about victims, witnesses and suspects as necessary.

B. Absence Authority

1. When the Chief of Police is unavailable to coordinate the release of information with the University's Office of Communications and Public Affairs, the Deputy Chief or designee will do so.
2. The Chief of Police or designee will review police reports with the representative from the Office of Communications and Public Affairs prior to the release of any information. Reports should be carefully checked concerning involvement of juveniles prior to releasing information. The names of juveniles found in police reports shall not be released to the media except when charged as adults. Reports of other incidents regarding domestic violence, sexual assaults, etc., may also be redacted as required to protect the victim(s).

C. Notifications

UMBPF personnel are responsible for notifying the Chief of Police or designee immediately of any information released, incidents, or situations which will likely generate the media's interests.

D. Access for News Media Representatives

1. News media representatives will be denied access to areas other than the assembly point or command post when, in the judgment of the ranking police officer, their presence will interfere with the police operation.
2. As soon as possible, members will assist media representatives in gaining needed access to the scene of an incident when such access will not interfere with the police operation.

3. Police officers may deny access for legitimate law enforcement investigative reasons or for safety reasons. They may not authorize the media to trespass on private property. Permission must be obtained from owners or their representative when photographs, films or videotapes are to be taken on private property, once the police operation/activity allows access to the scene.

E. Providing Information to the Media

1. The media will be provided with the nature of the crime, when and where it occurred and a brief synopsis of known facts concerning the incident. Information concerning property loss, physical injuries or death (after notification of next of kin) will also be provided as well as:
 - a. Information concerning the type of investigation and the length of the investigation;
 - b. General information concerning the existence of suspects; and
 - c. The name, address, description, etc., of a suspect who has been charged.
2. After the arrest of an individual, other than a juvenile, the following information may be released to the media upon request:
 - a. The defendant's name, age, residence and other factual background information;
 - b. The nature of the charge upon which the arrest is made;
 - c. The identity of any agencies that assisted the UMBPF in making the arrest;
 - d. The circumstances surrounding the arrest;
 - e. Custody status; and
 - f. The hearing date, if known.

F. Information Not Released to the Media

1. The identification of juveniles, witnesses, and the identity of victims of sexual assault or sex related offenses will not be released. Other non-releasable information may include:
 - a. A detailed description of the suspect or evidence or any other information which could hinder the investigation;
 - b. Prior criminal record of the suspect;

- c. The character and reputation of the accused except when the release of such information will aid in the apprehension of the accused or to warn the public of a potential danger;
 - d. The existence or contents of any confession, admission, or statement given by the accused, or the refusal or failure of the accused to make any statement, to perform any examination or submit to any test; and
 - e. Personal opinions about the suspect, including guilt or innocence, mental status, anticipated plea or value of evidence.
2. The release of information pertaining to mutual efforts between the UMBPF and other agencies will be coordinated through all involved agencies. The agency having primary jurisdiction over the incident will be responsible for releasing information to the news media.
 3. Do not reveal the details of an internal investigation to the press or other news media until the case has been brought to a logical conclusion. All information released concerning an internal investigation will conform to the requirements of current state law as it relates to the rights of police officers.

G. Use of Social Media

1. The use of social media can be an effective tool for the release of information in a timely manner. Its use can efficiently provide factual information or warnings to the University community and the community at large.
2. The use of social media for the dissemination of information shall be determined by the Chief of Police or designee in coordination with the Office of Communications and Public Affairs.
3. Agency members shall not use social media to provide information to the University community or the community at large without the authorization of the Chief of Police or designee.
4. Private social media accounts of agency members shall remain their own domain and private property. Though it is not the intention of the agency to impose restrictions on its members, they shall be aware that statements of opinion, investigative information, photos, etc., regarding criminal or administrative investigations, policies, procedures, or activities are prohibited from posting their social media accounts. See **WD 3.1, General Conduct** for further information.

Written Directive System Impact

Upon approval and publication, this edition of WD 9.5 supersedes all previous editions. Additionally, it incorporates and replaces the public information portion of WD 6.25, Public Information and Community Relations. WD 6.25 will be deactivated from the Police Force Manual system.

Martinez Quteaz Davenport, Sr., MS
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CALEA Standard (s): 54.1.1; 54.1.3