5-03/060.10 - News Media Interview Requests

All news media requests to interview a prisoner must be authorized by the concerned Custody Division chief. The decision to grant or deny the interview will depend on a variety of circumstances, and each request shall be carefully scrutinized. Interviews shall be granted only if the safety of all inmates and the security of the jail will not be compromised.

The media representative must be from a bonafide news gathering agency and possess valid identification. Sheriff's Headquarters Bureau shall coordinate all news media interviews that take place in any Department custody facility, station, or court lockup. News media interviews shall not be granted for:

- Prisoners who have not been arraigned. This applies to all prisoners confined at a Department custody facility, station, or court lockup. Any exception to this policy will require a court order;
- Prisoners suffering from mental disorders or undergoing court ordered psychiatric evaluations;
- Federal prisoners, including media information and/or photographs, which are prohibited without the written approval of the U.S. Marshal; and
- Prisoners at a Department court lockup without the approval of the chief of Court Services Division or his designated area commander.

The officer handling the request shall complete a News Media Interview Record (SH-CR-550) and shall inform the concerned prisoner, in private, through an interpreter if necessary, of the request for an interview. The News Media Interview Record (SH-CR-550) shall be checked and signed by the prisoner indicating an understanding of his constitutional rights and acceptance or refusal of the interview.

If the prisoner:

- Refuses the interview, the requesting news media shall be so notified;
- Refuses an interview, he shall be requested to sign or indicate refusal of the interview on the News Media Interview Record (SH-CR-550);
- Requests consultation with his attorney prior to granting approval for an interview, or wishes his attorney to be present during the interview, the unit watch commander shall provide the inmate with the opportunity to contact the attorney of record; and/or
- Is represented by the L.A. County Public Defender's Office, it shall be noted on the SH-CR-550. It is the policy of the Public Defender's Office that their clients shall not give media interviews. If the prisoner insists on the interview, the watch commander shall call the Chief of Central Superior Court Trials Division, Public Defender's Office, at (213) 974-2901, who will arrange for a public defender to represent the prisoner at the interview. The news media representative shall be advised of public defender requirements;
    - If the public defender's office is closed or permission cannot be obtained, the interview shall be denied.

News media interviews shall take place in a security area designated by the unit commander. Sworn personnel shall be present; however, they shall not participate in the interview.

Recording Devices

News media recording devices, including tape recorders, television cameras, and still cameras shall not be

allowed inside security areas. Any exception to this policy requires the approval of the chief of concerned Custody Division or his designated area commander. General or random filming of prisoners shall not be permitted.

News media personnel wishing to enter custody security areas at a Sheriff's facility for the purpose of recording or filming, in any form, for any reason other than a prisoner interview requires the Sheriff's approval via Media Liaison Section of Sheriff's Headquarters Bureau. Advance notification of not less than two business days is required for approval.

News media interview records shall be maintained at the originating unit for two years.