0015 - MEDIA RELATIONS AND INTERVIEWS

LOS ANGELES COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

DETECTIVE DIVISION

SPECIAL VICTIMS BUREAU

Bureau Order No:	**0015**
Subject:	**MEDIA RELATIONS AND INTERVIEWS**

Effective Date	Jan. 2023	**Last Date Reviewed**	Jan. 2023	**Last Date Revised**	Jan. 2023

PURPOSE:

The purpose is to provide guidelines for personnel assigned to the Special Victims Bureau (SVB), in dealing with the media when information and interviews are sought.

OVERVIEW

All personnel shall adhere to the Policy and Press Manual and Section 3-01/080.00 of the Manual of Policy and Procedures when dealing with the media.

POLICY

It is the policy of the SVB that, *as a general rule,* in cases involving high-media interest, personnel assigned to the Sheriff's Headquarters Bureau, will be contacted. Media requests for information shall not be granted if disclosing the information will jeopardize a case. For other cases and general requests for information, bureau members shall obtain supervisor approval prior to being interviewed or providing information. Supervisors shall consult with the Unit Commander, through channels, to discuss the request prior to approving an interview.

Personnel given authorization to participate in a media interview, shall provide accurate information, and this information shall be based on ethical, professional, and practical considerations.

Before holding a press release or media availability, where the intention is to release a photograph of the suspect, the Unit Commander or Operations Lieutenant SHALL be consulted in the assessment process and approve any release. Personnel shall exercise caution and be guided by our quest for the truth as we seek to exonerate the innocent and prosecute those responsible for criminal conduct. In those cases where the facts are unclear or without corroboration, alternative options to a media release shall be considered as significant impact to a subject’s character may result.

Personnel shall avoid giving opinions, speculation, educated guesses, editorial comments or personal views about a case when being interviewed by the media. Personnel shall not be abrupt or terse in giving responses and should avoid saying "no comment." It is better to indicate *that the matter is still under investigation or information is still being obtained, and it would be premature to comment on the matter*

being discussed. It is best to avoid any temptation to provide a response that goes beyond the scope of the question. Personnel shall not interpret Department or Bureau policy.

Prior to any interview, it is permissible and good practice to ask the interviewer to go over the questions that are planned. Personnel being taped for a later broadcast can ask the reporter to stop any audio or video equipment and start over (Refer to the attached "Bill of Rights" for the television interviewee for additional guidance.)

Prior to any news release, the concerned Unit Commander, who has jurisdiction of the incident being released, shall be notified. A record of this notification shall be made on the SVB News release form.

Bureau personnel shall refer reporters who request the following types of information to the Sheriff's Information Bureau:

- Interpretation of Department policy

- Comments or information on trends or statistics involving the Department.

Reviewed and approved by:

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Richard Ruiz, Captain

Special Victims Bureau

BILL OF RIGHTS FOR THE TELEVISION INTERVIEWEE

In interviews of a spontaneous nature:

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT . . . .

1. To know who is interviewing you and whom he or she represents.

2. To have total agreement by both parties of the ground rules, no matter how hastily arranged.

3. To be treated courteously. The questions can be tough, but the reporter's demeanor should not be abusive.

4. To have off-the-record comments, if previously stated, honored. (As a rule, never say anything off-the-record unless you know and trust the reporter.)

5. Not to be physically threatened or impaired by handheld lights too close or microphones shoved in your face.

6. To break the interview off after a reasonable amount of time, but only after important questions have been answered.

In pre-arranged, office or TV studio interviews....

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT . . . .

1. To all the above.

2. To know the general content, subject or thrust of the interview so you have time to research the appropriate information.

3. To know approximately how long the interview will last.

4. To know if there are other guests appearing with you on a talk or panel show and what the nature of their role will be.

5. To have a public relations or other company representative present.

6. To make your own audio or videotape of the interview, or to be able to obtain a complete tape from the TV station.

7. To make sure that no material is recorded by the reporter on audio or videotape unless you are told you are being recorded. The pre-interview discussion, talk between commercials or after show chitchat cannot be used on the air unless you approve.

8. To be allowed to answer without the constant harassment of interruptions, assuming your answers are brief and to the point.

9. To ignore editorial comments or pejorative asides by reporters or panelists.

10. To have an accurate on-air introduction that will put the interview in the proper perspective.

11. In the film or tape editing to have the basic intent and flavor of your answers come through.

12. To have the time to get some of YOUR points across in the interview and not be expected only to answer questions obediently and obsequiously.

WHEN ANSWERING QUESTIONS

DO . . . .

ax. Be relaxed, confident and honest.
ax. Maintain a neutral attitude.
ax. Use pitch and rate changes for variety.
ax. Build in a cut-off with your answer if you wish to drop the subject.
ax. Discuss only those activities and policies within the purview of your area of responsibility.
ax. Admit you don't know an answer if that's the case; you can promise to get back with the person just be sure if you promise more information, you deliver.
ax. If the situation permits, tape the interview yourself if possible.
ax. Use visual aids if you absolutely have to, but make sure they're simple, readable, uncluttered and relevant to your subject. Also, practice with them beforehand.
ax. Above all, GIVE POSITIVE ANSWERS!!

DON'T . . . .

ax. Use jargon, acronyms and technical terms.
ax. Use speech mannerisms such as er-ah.
ax. Be curt, even with the dumbest question.
ax. Answer more than one question at a time.
ax. Restart the question.
ax. Begin with gratuitous phrases such as, I'm glad you asked that.
ax. Give a no comment response; if you're unsure of the answer or can't discuss it, say no.
ax. Get into a verbal fencing match if it's classified admit it's classified and move on.
ax. Volunteer information unless it supports a positive point you want to make.
ax. Be defensive.
ax. Ever assume anything is off the record. There is no such thing unless you're certain the reporter will honor the agreement.
ax. Let anyone put words in your month. Only agree if the facts and figures are the truth.
ax. Lie. Answer as honestly and completely as you can your agency's reputation rests on the spokesperson's veracity.