

Media Response Guidelines



Any crisis in a school will generate intense interest from the public and the media. It is critical to be prepared for this attention and scrutiny and be ready to communicate during difficult times. The goal is to share information about the situation as quickly as possible with staff members, parents, and community members. The following guidelines may be used when working with the media or communicating during a crisis situation.

- Notify the district superintendent's office or the director of communications when a crisis situation occurs.
- Unless otherwise designated, the director of communications will serve as the district's spokesperson with the media during a crisis situation. If another administrator is designated as the spokesperson, the director of communications will provide assistance in preparing statements to the media.
- All calls from the media should be referred to the director of communications.
- Statements about the crisis situation will be made as soon as possible. The district will share as much information as possible, but will only share information that is factual and can be confirmed. Other updates will be provided to the media and public as more information becomes available.
- Schools are not required to allow media access to facilities during a crisis or at any other time. Principals have the authority to allow or deny access to the campus. Media are allowed on public property near school grounds.
- The director of communications will coordinate with information officers from other agencies responding to the crisis.
- Along with sharing information with the media, the department of communications will use other strategies to share information with parents as quickly as possible.
- Depending on the situation, a designated area will be established for the media. Regular updates will be provided to the media by the director of communications.
- Students and staff members are not obligated to talk to the media. Unless designated as a spokesperson, staff members should refer all media inquiries to the director of communications.

Handling the Media

The following are basic tips to follow when responding to the media.

- Do not speculate, make judgments, or draw conclusions.
- Only provide information that can be confirmed.
- Do not comment on issues or situations outside of your area of expertise and responsibility.
- A media interview is your opportunity to communicate your message. In an interview, have three or four key points to convey and remain focused on sharing the messages.
- Never use "no comment" as a response. Reporters may assume you are hiding something. Use "I don't know" or "I'm sorry, I'm not able to answer that question at this time."
- Never make "off the record" comments. Only share information with reporters that you are willing to have shared with others.
- Do not offer "exclusives" to a particular reporter. Information that is shared with one reporter should be shared with all reporters.

Data Privacy Information

You may disclose that an incident occurred (i.e. the date and time), but DO NOT disclose the names of the individuals involved or any other personally identifiable information (i.e., age, gender or hospital released to, pictures or video) to the media.